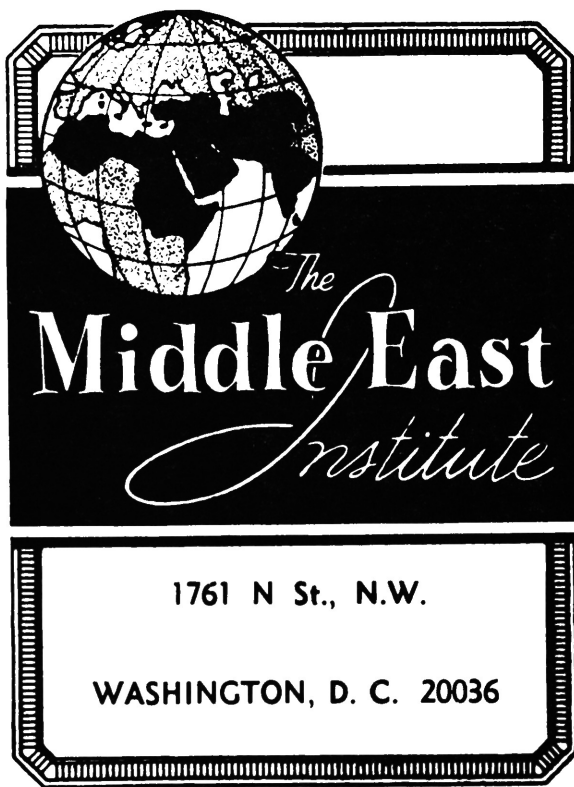


HERÁT
THE GRANARY & GARDEN
OF
CENTRAL ASIA



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HERAT:

THE GRANARY AND GARDEN OF CENTRAL ASIA.

WITH AN INDEX AND A MAP.

BY

COLONEL G. B. MALLÉSON, C.S.I.,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF THE INDIAN MUTINY,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

"You stand aloof from us, but you will be unable to continue this course; our country is good, and it is without a head; and, like a beautiful widow, it voluntarily avows her attachment to you, and you cannot refuse to accept her as a wife."—*A Kandahari to Sir Alexander Burnes.*

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TO

E. Ashmead-Bartlett, Esq.

MY DEAR ASHMEAD-BARTLETT,

The Patriotic Association, formed to aid in upholding the honour and the interests of England without distinction of party, was founded by you, and has been brought to its present pitch of prosperity and influence chiefly by your genius, your energy, and your indomitable resolution. More than that. At a great crisis of the fortunes of England, when the Russian forces were pressing upon Constantinople, it was you who knew how to clothe in noble language the thoughts which lay dormant in the heart of every lover of his country; you, who to an immense assemblage of your countrymen painted in glowing words the dangers which must result from a policy of inaction, and who, appealing thus to the people, drew from them a response, which, at a vital period of its existence, materially strengthened the Government of their choice.

How active and how indefatigable, whilst unobtrusive, have been your efforts in every direction in the same great cause during the past three years is known only to those who, sharing your sentiments, have likewise shared your labours.

To you, then, as representing the opinions of the millions of our countrymen who place the greatness and interests of

their country above all private considerations, I fitly inscribe a book the main purpose of which is to point to the action necessary for the maintenance of our great Eastern Empire. That Empire—if I may apply to it the beautiful expression of the Master of polished oratory of the present century—that Empire was cradled in its infancy by the genius of a Clive. May it be crowned in its culminating glory by the patriotic and far-sighted policy of a Beaconsfield!

I remain,

My dear Ashmead-Bartlett,

Yours very sincerely,

G. B. MALLESON.

27, *West Cromwell Road*,
15th *January* 1880.

P R E F A C E .

THE authorities to which I am chiefly indebted for the materials of which this book is formed, are, Ritter's "Erdkunde"; d'Herbelot's "Bibliothèque Orientale"; Quartremère's "Notice sur le Matla-Assaadeïn ou Madjma - Albahreïn"; Ouseley's "Oriental Geography"; Fraser's "Journey to Khorásán"; Burnes's "Travels to Bokhára"; Burnes's "Kábul"; Ferishta's History; the "Asiatic Journal"; the "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal"; Conolly's "Journal"; extracts from the journals of Christie, Pottinger, and Forster; Abbott's "Journey to Khiva"; Ferrier's "Caravan Journeys"; the "Memoirs of Bábar"; Erskine's "History of Bábar and Humáyun"; MacGregor's "Journey through Khorásán"; "Proceedings of the

Royal Geographical Society"; the appendices to Thornton's Gazetteer of the Panjáb; and Vambéry's "Travels in Central Asia."

I take this opportunity, likewise, to express my acknowledgments to my friend Mr. Pincott for his learned assistance in tracing the derivation of Oriental names; and my grateful thanks to Mr. Justen, the able representative of Messrs. Dulau and Co., for the clear indications as to the sources of information regarding Herát which he was kind enough to give me.

G. B. M.

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ERRATUM.

Page 25, line 7, from *foot, for* hundred thousands, *read* hundreds of thousands.

HERAT :

THE GRANARY AND GARDEN

OF

CENTRAL ASIA.

CHAPTER I.

ARGUMENT.

SINCE the period when, at the close of the year 1877, the drawing together of the bonds between Russia and the Amír Shír Alí rendered necessary the armed intervention of the British in Afghánistán, the attention of the public has been fixed very much upon the events which have been progressing in that country. Again have Kandahár and Ghazní, Kábul and Jallal-ábád, Khaibar and Kúrm, Gandamak and Jagdalak, become household words. Again have the Sikh and the Pathán, the Gúrkah and the Rohilla, vied in valorous action with their British comrades. Again

have the discipline and the courage of the two armies, well directed by skilful leaders, triumphed over numbers, over difficult country, over fanaticism, over treachery. In spite of difficulties, the mere description of which gives but little idea of their formidable nature, the policy of the Government has triumphed, and the greater part of Afghánistán lies at the feet of Her Majesty the Queen.

I have said that the mere perusal of an account of the difficulties which our skilled generals and our gallant soldiers have surmounted, gives but a faint idea of their nature and their extent. I may add that the consideration of those difficulties is necessary to the right understanding and the due appreciation of the policy, at a very difficult crisis, of Her Majesty's Government. Our troops have forced passes which were deemed impregnable, they have stormed heights which their enemies considered inaccessible, they have gained positions which were regarded as being entirely beyond the range even of their prowess. But whilst we admit to the full the credit, the enormous credit, devolving upon our generals and our soldiers for thus "conquering the impossible," we are bound to take into consideration not only the qualities for

fight, but the qualities for direction and command, possessed by the enemy whom they expelled from those formidable positions. Herein lies a question of far greater importance than might at the outset be imagined. Granted that the positions referred to were impregnable if thoroughly well defended, these two questions arise. Were the untutored Afgháns capable of offering a successful defence? Would Afgháns tutored by Russian officers have been capable of offering a successful defence? To the first question the answer must be in the negative. Brave when attacked in front, the Afgháns have invariably given way when threatened on their flank or on their rear. Their chiefs have no scientific knowledge of the art of war. Untaught, and by nature ungifted, they have never shown themselves able to take the best advantage of a defensive position. It may, then, be laid down, as an axiom which cannot be challenged, that the untutored Afgháns were not capable of making a successful defence of their positions against British troops.

But the second question must be replied to in a different sense. The Afgháns possess the headlong courage of the mountaineers of all countries. Rus-

sian officers would have supplied their want of tactical and scientific knowledge. We may then safely affirm that had time been allowed for the cementing of the growing alliance between Russia and Afghánistán, the Afghán soldiers would have been led by Russian officers, the passes leading towards Kábul would have been rendered absolutely impregnable by Russian engineers. Under those circumstances no effort made by England to recover by force of arms her lost influence in Afghánistán could possibly have succeeded.

How near we were to a condition of affairs which must ultimately have proved fatal to the hold of the British upon India, the world may perhaps never know. But the world knows already that a Russian envoy was in Kábul supplanting British influence in that city; that for some years previously a Russian scientific mission had had its head-quarters in Herát, and that the members of that scientific mission had surveyed a great part of Khorasán and Afghán Turkistán, noting in each locality its capabilities for the provision of troops, the disposition of the local force, the climate, the soil, the distance from the nearest town, the supplies already stored, and the guns and

ammunition available on the spot. The members of this scientific mission had, in addition, impressed upon the minds of the people of those localities that Russia was preparing for her spring, and that within a very few years that spring would be made.

It cannot be doubted that but for the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin that spring would have been made in 1877. Russia had made all her preparations to reply in Afghánistán to the vigorous action which, in Europe, had snatched Constantinople from her grasp. Her secret manœuvres were about to be supported by open co-operation. But both of these schemes were baffled; that of open co-operation by the Treaty of Berlin; the secret manœuvres by the British invasion of Afghánistán. The one of these acts of high policy would have been incomplete without the other.

The Treaty of Berlin stopped, indeed, the march of the Russian columns from Samarkand and Ferghána, but it did not stop Russian intrigues in Kábul. Those who have had experience of the wonderful manipulating power of Russian agents, of the adroitness with which they transform themselves from the position of lookers-on to that of masters of the situation,

will not be surprised to learn that in a very short space of time the Russian embassy in Kábul had become the ruling power in Kábul. Reinforced as it was being perpetually, under one pretext or another, by men of aptitude and experience, and supported by the credit, greatly exaggerated, gained by Russia from her victories in Asia Minor, it is no matter of speculation, it is a certainty, that, had Afghánistán been left unassailed, the Russian embassy would, by its members, have fortified all the passes leading to the interior of the country, and have rendered them impregnable to an army so small in numbers as that which invaded Afghánistán in 1877-78.

The knowledge that Russia was thus preparing, indirectly, the action which, in its more direct form, had been baffled by the Treaty of Berlin, was alone sufficient, I will not simply say to justify, but to necessitate, the invasion of Afghánistán by the British. To have remained quiescent then, would have been equivalent to the act of a man who, without either remonstrance or opposition, permits a well-known burglar to take possession, before his very eyes, of the keys of his strong-box!

At the present moment, I have said, the greater

part of Afghánistán lies at the feet of Her Majesty the Queen. Her forces hold Kábul, Kandahár, and Jallalábád ; they will soon hold Ghazni as well. The possession of these four centres will doubtless be sufficient for the time to overawe the turbulent mountaineers who have so long devastated the country. But it will not settle the Afghán question. To settle that question now, as, if we are to retain India, it will have ultimately to be settled, it will be necessary to take a wider view of the subject and to act upon that view.

The first point that seems to press itself upon the consideration is the relation between Afghánistán and the Afgháns. I have found a very general impression prevailing in certain circles that the Afgháns stand towards Afghánistán, including the territories of Herát, Afghán Turkistán, and Badakshán in the same relation which the English occupy with respect to England. There could not be a greater fallacy. It would be far more correct, indeed it would be approximately correct, to affirm that the normal relations of the Afgháns to Afghánistán are precisely similar to the relations which the Highlanders of the first half of the eighteenth century bore towards the whole of

Scotland. The Afgháns in fact are the Highlanders of Afghánistán. They are nothing more. Not only have the Afgháns not built a single city in Afghánistán, but they have not occupied a single city without impairing its resources, pillaging its people, injuring its trade, damaging its public buildings, and diminishing its importance. Kábul and Ghazní, Kandahár and Herát, have had their gala days of prosperity and splendour, but those days are associated with people other than the Afgháns and with rulers other than the Ghilzís and the Duránís. While the four next descendants of Bábar reigned in India, Kábul was a flourishing and important commercial centre. Its inhabitants then were not Afgháns. The Afgháns were rude mountain tribes living by plunder and by pillage. The prosperous days of Ghazní are associated with the name of Mahmúd and his successors. Mahmúd was a Turk, his followers who inhabited Ghazní were Turks. The Afgháns then, too, were the robbers of the mountain. The dynasty of Mahmúd had reigned for a century and a half in Afghánistán, with Ghazní as the capital, when it was expelled by the mountaineers of Ghor. The first act of these Afgháns was emblematical of their whole

subsequent career as a people. Entering Ghazni, they gave to the flames, to slaughter, and to devastation, the city which had been beautified by Mahmúd and his successors. They not only destroyed the monuments of the Ghaznvide kings—they effaced every trace of them—three tombs only excepted. For seven days the massacre continued, and then it culminated in the murder by the Afghán leader of the most venerable and learned men in the place. Kandahár flourished under the mild rule first of the descendants of Bábar and subsequently of Persia till the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Ghilzí Afgháns then seized and made a kingdom of it, and, emerging from it, momentarily subdued Persia. With the exception of the eleven years during which the city belonged to Nádir Sháh, Kandahár has subsequently remained Afghán. But it has known no more the prosperity it enjoyed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the city owned a master who would protect, and the Afgháns were still robbers of the mountains.

But the city in which Afghán influence has been most detrimental to all that renders life valuable—to all, even, that hinders life from becoming a burden—is Herát. For three or four hundred years the valley

and city of Herát were the granary and garden of Central Asia. In that valley and within the walls of that city the desolating presence of the Afghán was in those days never felt. The inhabitants, of mixed Persian and Turkí blood, were industrious, inventive, energetic, and pains-taking. The fertile valley of the Herirúd produced supplies far more than sufficient for their simple wants. Their city lay on the intersecting point of the roads which communicated with the markets of Europe, of India, of Bokhára, and of Persia. Under these circumstances Herát soon became the most important commercial city in Central Asia. The effects of that commercial prosperity speedily manifested themselves. Her streets became adorned with palaces, with markets, with aqueducts, the remains of which even now excite wonder and admiration. The courts of her ruling princes became centres to which the intellectual aristocracy of Central Asia resorted—all who were famous in poesy, in science, in astronomy, in architectural acquirements. Her fame was sung by poets and recorded by historians. Nor was the prosperity confined to the city alone. It spread into the valleys to the north and to the west. To this day the valley of the Mur-

gháb, even as far as Merv, is strewn with ruins of castles and villas which attested the prosperity of the parent city. Nor was that prosperity transient. Conquerors indeed came, and besieged—occasionally they even stormed—the city. But those conquerors were not Afgháns. They did not carry in their hands a withering and perpetual desolation. After coming to conquer they remained to repair. And so inherent were the advantages possessed by the city, that after each new conquest she rose again almost immediately from her ashes, and recovered her former prosperity. Not even the jealousy of Persia and the stimulus given by her kings to Mashad could seriously impair that prosperity. Herát still remained the commercial Queen of Central Asia. She remained the commercial Queen of Central Asia till the year 1717.

In 1717 Herát experienced for the first time the horrors of conquest by the Afgháns, and the still more prolonged misery of Afghán rule. The nature of that rule has been described in words that burn, by an eye-witness, the illustrious Hungarian, Arminius Vambéry. How the Afghán conqueror swaggers in the streets, armed to the teeth, disdaining work, but ready at any time to murder and to plunder; how

the Afghán governor lays on imported and exported articles duties all but prohibitory, thus stifling the trade which is the life-blood of the place ; how the very caravans which, before the Afghán period, traversed the neighbouring valleys and passes in safety, are now plundered within Herátí territory, often with the connivance of the Afghán governor ; how the people, ground down by taxes, by plunder, by oppression in its most loathsome forms, turn their longing eyes to England to rid them of their insolent oppressor—all these things, and more, are told in full detail by Vambéry. Many of them are referred to in the body of this book. Talk of Bulgarian atrocities ! They sink to nothing when compared with the daily, hourly atrocities perpetrated by the Afgháns upon the Herátís. In this case, too, the atrocities extend even to the land. The eloquent words of the Prophet might with absolute truth be addressed to the unfortunate inhabitants : “ Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire : your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.”

That which is true now, which was witnessed by Vambéry in 1863, has been true since 1717. Since

that period to the present day, Herát has suffered oppression but little varied and always continuing.

Yet, Herát survives. She survives because her splendid situation as the centre point where all the commercial roads of Central Asia unite, as the Queen of a valley not to be surpassed in fertility, still makes her existence necessary. She survives, notwithstanding the exodus of many of her best artisans to Mashad—a consequence of Afghán misrule; notwithstanding the terrible exactions to which she is constantly subjected. But she survives a wreck of her former self. Her palaces are in ruins, her markets are but a shadow of what they once were, her children crouch before the insolent Afghán.

But she survives. The vital spark still burns,—dimly indeed, but it burns. It would require but little to fan it into a flame. The first necessity is the removal of the oppressor who, for more than a century and a half, has so shamefully abused his position. Take away the Afghán, and replace him by whom-ever you may; replace him by a real and a powerful protector, by the Russian or the Englishman, and Herát will speedily recover more than her former prosperity. Her situation guarantees such a result.

Commerce must return to her when the obstructions to the course of commerce shall be removed ; when the free use of the advantages so bountifully bestowed upon her by nature shall be secured to her. Yes, remove the oppressor, give Herát a government which will insure safety to life and property, equality before the law, and security against an invader, and commerce must return to her. In the train of commerce will follow a prosperity exceeding that which, in the fourteenth century, made Herát the Queen of eastern cities. The nation which by its overlordship shall secure to Herát such benefits, will obtain for itself the markets of Central Asia. People talk, without knowledge and without thought, of the expense which will be entailed on England by the occupation of Afghánistán. It is true that the occupation of mountainous districts of Afghánistán, not including Herat, will entail a large expenditure, but the occupation of the entire country, inclusive of Herát, is a very different matter. The possession of the valleys of the Herírúd and the Murgháb is the possession of a gold mine. In a few years Herát would prove the milch-cow of Northern India.

The question, then, presents itself—upon whom

will that possession devolve? It may, I think, be taken for granted that the Afghán rule in Herát is approaching its term. The union of the several Afghán clans, separated from each other by hereditary feuds, may already be reckoned a thing of the past. The Afgháns formed a kingdom in Afghánistán on the death of Nádir Sháh in 1749, only because the disappearance of that conqueror left each part of the vast empire he had bound together without a head. In the turmoil that followed, an Abdáli chief who possessed genius made out of the rude mountaineers' a nation. That nation no longer exists. The history of Afghánistán during the present century has been the history of contests for supremacy of the chiefs of Afghán tribes. At the present moment anarchy reigns supreme amongst them. The union of a kingdom which includes the foreign provinces of Herát, of Afghán Turkistán, and of Badakhshán, difficult to be maintained when the tribes were dominated by one man, has now become absolutely impossible. But one push from without is needed to shake off the Afghán yoke.

There are three powers by one of whom that push will most certainly be made,—Persia, Russia, and

England. The temporising party in this country—the party which always seeks to put off the evil day, which would place upon the shoulders of posterity a burden which they have neither the courage nor the high spirit to bear—the temporising party already advocates the transfer of Herát to Persia. Granted, for a moment, that Persia were to continue a free agent, deaf to the arguments, and defiant of the power, of her northern enemy, such a transfer must still be regarded as alike impolitic and impossible. It would be like transferring Venice to Austria—to Austria already the possessor of Trieste. More than two centuries ago Persia built up Mashad as a rival to Herát just as Austria during the greater part of the first moiety of the present century patronised Trieste at the expense of Venice. The misery entailed upon Herát during the last century and a half by the occupation of her by the Afgháns has already forced many of the most skilled artisans to migrate to Mashad. Would Persia now neglect Mashad to foster Herát? The thought is not to be entertained.

Then again—can Persia remain for ever indifferent to the blandishments or the arms of Russia? No one will assert it. At the present moment Russia is pre-

paring a formidable armament to move on Merv. The modern Merv is little more than a geographical expression. The huts in the vicinity of the ruined castle which once was Merv offer in themselves no temptation to an invader. But those huts are the stepping-stones to the Persian frontier town of Sar-rakhs—a most important position—and to Herát. In the coming struggle for supremacy in the most fertile portions of Central Asia it will be impossible for Persia to remain neutral. She will fall under the influence of that one of the rival powers which shall show the greatest daring. Should Russia succeed in annexing the country of the Turkmáns of Merv, whilst England still lingers at or behind Kandahár, her influence in Persia will become predominant, and in that case a Herát guarded by Persia would soon become in all respects Russian.

The idea, then, of forming of the valley of the Herírúd a neutral zone between Russia and England, of which Persia should be the guardian, must be summarily dismissed. There remains, then, the question of a Russian occupation. It is a question which will not wait long for an answer. Already General Kaufmann is preparing the army which will cross the Oxus

at Charjui, and march thence on Merv, there to co-operate with the other army which Tergukasoff is about to lead from the vicinity of the Caspian. The reader will find in the seventh chapter of this book complete details of the country which intervenes between Charjui and Merv. He will see that the route presents no difficulties which a determined and practised general, such as Kaufmann has proved himself to be, will not be able to overcome. Supposing that the march be accomplished, what will the united armies do at Merv? Merv, I repeat, is little more than a geographical expression. But an army encamped there would command the high road to Sarrakhs, distant only some fifty miles, and the two routes to Herát, distant respectively two hundred and twenty and two hundred and forty miles. I repeat, then, that if the Russian expedition to Merv, now preparing, prove successful, the question of the occupation of Herát by Russia will at once become a question which might at any moment be answered.

Let us suppose the reply favourable to Russia—what, then, will be the consequence? Russia will then possess the outlying bulwark from which all the conquerors from the north, one alone excepted, have issued

to over-run India. It was from Herát that Alexander the Great started for the Indus. Mahmúd of Ghazní and Muhammad Ghorí were possessors of Herát when they dashed upon India. Chinghiz Khán and Taimúr both forced their way through the same portal. Bábar, the founder of the Moghol dynasty, was indeed an exception. He started for his conquest from Kábul. But at the time of his invasion Khorásán was becoming the prey of warriors who were too much engaged at home to dream of striking for India. His descendants in India suffered because they were not strong enough to prevent the occupation of both Kandahár and Herát by Persia. Nádir Sháh conquered Herát before he besieged Kandahár, and poured his armies thence upon India. Upon his death Ahmad Sháh Durání seized Herát, and very shortly afterwards successfully invaded Hindústán.

It is easy to understand why a Russian Herát—that is a Herát possessed by a powerful and ambitious power always enlarging its borders—must ever be a standing menace to Hindústán. The fruitful and fertile valley of the Herírúd furnishes a new base in which an army can be thoroughly equipped and whence it can march south-westward. In that valley

all the munitions of war are produced or can be manufactured. The willow and the poplar flourish, mines of lead and of iron abound. Russia would require to bring nothing across long, sterile, and sandy deserts. The iron and the lead are there; the saltpetre is there; the charcoal is there; the corn, the wine, and the oil are there; the horses are there; and in a very short time she could drill the hardy population into such a state of efficiency as would enable them to vie even with the Sikhs of the Panjáb and the Patháns of the frontier. But that is not all. Secure in a fertile country which provided all the supplies requisite for her army, possessed, by the occupation of Herát, of the markets of Central Asia—a magnificent trade from which England would thus for ever be excluded—Russia could afford to wait whilst she put in practice in the native courts and the bazaars of Hindústán those devices in which she is a proficient, and which she has worked so successfully in Bulgaria, in Servia, and in Roumelia. Thenceforward there would be no peace for the people of India. The English in that country would live under a continual fear of the intrigue which corrupts native soldiers, which wins over their native allies, which

makes every man doubtful of the morrow. Can a worse position for English interests be imagined? The English empire of Hindústán would resemble a tenanted mansion, the keys of the doors of which were held by robbers daily engaged in attempting to corrupt the servants on the basement. Could there be, I repeat, a position more impossible to be endured?

So much for the occupation of Herát by Russia. To England it would mean—in one sentence—the loss of India. Yet this is the question which the people of England have now to face and to answer.

How will they answer it? Whilst they are slowly coming to a determination, let me place before them a few facts. Russia, arrived at the rude huts which represent Merv, would be Russia in the valley of the Murgháb, leading by a perfectly feasible road, about two hundred and forty miles in length, to Herát. Russia at Merv would also be Russia commanding the well-worn caravan route *viâ* Sarrakhs to Herát, about two hundred and twenty miles long. Descriptions of both these routes will be found in the seventh chapter. Russia at Merv whilst England is still at Kandahár—if she be even at Kandahár!—would be

Russia nearer than England by more than one hundred and fifty miles to the great prize of Central Asia, with two roads available for her armies. If England wait, then, to assert her suzerainty over Herát till Russia shall have reached Merv, the opportunity of permanently securing her frontier will have passed away for ever.

But, the reader may ask, what will Herát be to our Indian possessions? Herát would be more than an impregnable bulwark to those possessions. In a very few years she would become once again the commercial capital of Central Asia. Again would her markets be thronged, as of yore, by merchants from every corner of the eastern world. The course of the Central Asian trade has in no respect altered since Herát was the granary and the garden of Central Asia. The caravans tread the roads now on which they travelled then. The remarkable circumstance that, in spite of the oppression and robbery she has had to endure during the last century and a half, the glimmer of her former commercial greatness remains unquenched in Herát, attests the vitality of her position. In the fourth chapter of this book I have entered in fuller detail into the question of her

abundant resources. These combine with her position to assure to her, if she be but decently governed, an eternal and an ever-augmenting prosperity.

Why, then, should England hesitate? As, for the moment, the *de facto* heir of the Afghán government she has displaced, Herát and the adjacent territories of Afghán Turkistán and Badakhshán devolve on her by right of succession. Let her be careful to enter without delay into possession. Policy, justice, humanity, the very safety of our Indian empire, demand the movement. No people implore it more eagerly than the Herátis. "It needs only some attack," wrote Vambéry in 1863, "no matter by whom, to be made upon Herát, for the Herátí to be the first to take up arms against the Afgháns. . . . I find no exaggeration in the opinion that they long most for the intervention of the English, whose feelings of humanity and justice have led the inhabitants to forget the great differences in religion and nationality." Yes—and let it never be forgotten—there is no time for hesitation. If England go not speedily to Herát she will hear of the occupation of that place by Russia. I have shown what that will mean for England and

for British India. It was to stave off a far less formidable danger—the occupation of Herát by Persia—that Lord Palmerston waged the first Afghán war of 1838 and the Persian war of 1856. Will England be more blind to her interests now than she was on those memorable occasions? I will not believe it.

One word with reference to possible military criticism on the movement. It may be said, in fact I have heard it said by men who have not sufficiently studied the nature of the country and the history of the past, that it would be dangerous to hold a post three hundred and sixty-nine miles in advance of Kandahár, as it would be possible for a hostile army to penetrate between the two positions and to isolate the garrison of Herát. To this I reply that the danger is purely imaginary. Herát is in very deed the gate of India. The line between her and Kandahár is protected on the east by impassable mountains, on the west by deserts which no army could traverse. Those deserts never have been traversed by an army which had not previously taken Herát. And it would be easy to make Herát impregnable.

Such is the Argument of this book. I submit it with all humility to the consideration of my countrymen.

It has been written, I may assure them, in the most perfect good faith, and with but one aim—to show the necessity of at once securing the magnificent inheritance won for us by our ancestors. Above all, I dare affirm that it has not been written in the interests of a party. In common with very many of my countrymen who have spent their lives in the service of their country abroad, I have but one rule of politics. That rule is to support, by every legitimate means, the men—by whatever name they may call themselves—who will, before anything else, maintain in every part of the world the honour and the interests of our country. That honour and those interests are dearer to us than life itself, and we are prepared to undergo any trouble and any discomfort to support those who will maintain them.

It is because I believe, because thousands of the gentlemen of England and hundred thousands of the working-men of England believe, that that honour and those interests are threatened by the advance of Russia upon Merv, and would be seriously jeopardised by any hesitation on the part of England to occupy Herát, that I have compiled from the sources available to me a history of the principality of which

that city is the capital, and a record of the routes leading from it to Kandahár, to Mashad, to Merv, to Charjui, to Kábul, and to important centres in Afghán Turkistán. I am not without hope that the perusal of the narrative, showing as it does the important part played by Herát before the period of the Afghán tyranny, may evoke in all minds a determination that the granary and garden of Central Asia shall never fall into the possession of the enemies of England. Herát is the Gate of India. It is absolutely necessary that the possessors of that splendid estate should hold the gate leading into it.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW FRONTIER.

“THE Hindú Kúsh,” writes Mr. Boulger in his admirable and exhaustive work on Central Asia,* “with a line of fortresses from Herát to the capital of Badakhshán, would be a perfect frontier” to our Indian possessions, “strong in every essential demanded by military strategy. The number of troops required would not be large—less than those needed to defend the Hindú Kúsh alone. Fifteen thousand men at Herát, five thousand at Faizábád, and two thousand at Maimané, Shiborgan, and Takhtapul—not Balkh—and Khúlm, would be all that would be

* “Russia and England in Central Asia,” vol. i. page 130.

required, and only a third of these, ten thousand men, need be British." I find amongst the thoughtful politicians and soldiers who have devoted to the study of the question of the new Indian frontier the same care and attention I have paid to it myself, a general agreement with the principle thus laid down by Mr. Boulger. I accept it, then, as the principle which will eventually commend itself to the statesmen with whom will rest the final settlement of the frontier question. But although amongst the class I have referred to the definitions I have indicated find acceptance, this is the case only because its members have given to the subject the most careful consideration. They have studied it with the light of the experience of bygone ages on the one side, and with the reports of experts on the other. To the general public the same opportunity has not been offered. To them Herát and Faizábád and Maimané and Balkh necessarily represent names and nothing but names. Their position on the map, the geographical features of the country of which they are the chief towns, the nature of their populations, their military importance, the distances from our present frontier and from each other, are but little

known. Nor does a reference to a gazetteer or the study of an ordinary map much relieve them. The existing gazetteers are on that subject almost a blank, and until very recently the maps of Central Asia tended, as a rule, only to confuse. To supply, then, a want which is felt, and the existence of which, like every other form of ignorance, strengthens the hands of the anti-national party which, for some years past, has been playing in these islands the game of Russia, I propose to devote a few pages to a description of the country, which, known in past ages as the granary and garden of Central Asia, will soon, I hope, become the glacis of the fortress of Hindústán.

Mr. James Fraser, a gentleman who explored Khorásán in 1821-22, and who published three years later an account of his travels, thus describes that country. "Situating," he wrote, "on the borders of the two great divisions of the Asiatic world, Irán and Turán,*

* In general terms, Persia and Turkistán; or, to state it more accurately, the countries divided by the Oxus. "Since the time of Feridún," writes d'Herbelot (1776), "the provinces which, in the present day, form the kingdom of Persia, bear the name of Irán, whilst those beyond the Oxus are always called Turán. In the

and occupying a portion of both, Khorásán was continually a subject of dispute between the monarchs of each, and sometimes fell wholly into the power of the one, sometimes of the other. Whether in the more limited sense of its name, as a province, or in the more enlarged acceptation, as a state of no mean importance, it was the scene of mighty operations; and many of the greatest atrocities and severest conquests Asia ever witnessed, were committed in its cities, and took place upon its plains."

This description in no way exaggerates the importance of this border land. The people who inhabited it were in all respects worthy of their country. They were brave, hardy, and enterprising. If in the mountains of Khorásán the rulers of Persia have found the firmest bulwarks against the Turanians, in the inhabitants they have found their bravest warriors. Western Khorásán is, in fact, the Parthia of the Romans, the home of the warriors who first lowered the pride of the Roman legions. It was leading the descendants of these men that Nádír Sháh, himself a

treaties made between the Persians and the Turks, the Oxus has always been accepted as the line of demarcation between Irán and Turán."

Khorásání, conquered Afghánistán and over-ran the Panjáb and northern India. The position of the province and the capabilities of its people impressed themselves so strongly on the mind of that conqueror that he styled Khorásán "the Sword of Persia." "Whoever," he is reported to have said, "holds in his hand that sword, possessing the brain-capacity to wield it aright, is lord alike of Irán and of Turán." Nádír Sháh exemplified the truth of the aphorism.

The limits of the country known as Khorásán have varied with time and circumstances. Mr. Fraser, however, taking into account its natural lines and the political considerations affecting them, thus assigns the boundaries of the country.

"A line," he writes, "swerving but little from the meridian, and marked in its greatest extents by deserts, skirting the districts of Ispahán and Kashán, and meeting the Elburz mountains near Deh Nimak,* will divide Khorásán from Irák on the west. If this line from its northern extremity be continued in an easterly direction nearly to the meridian of Jahjarm, and thence crossing the mountains in a northerly

* About 52° 10' long., 35° 20' lat.

course to the plains of Gúrgáon at their feet, it will enter the desert on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea and touch the steppe of Khwárizm. It is not easy, nor is it of much importance, to decide in what part of the great desert that occupies the whole space between the feet of the Elburz range and the Oxus, the northern limits of Khorásán should be placed; politically speaking, it does not at present extend beyond the feet of these mountains. To the eastward it may properly be allowed to include the districts of Sarrahs, Hazárah and Balai Murgháb, and a line running between these and the dependencies of Balkh, in a direction nearly south, including the districts of Herát and touching Sistán, would circumscribe Khorásán on the east; Kerman and part of Fars upon the south complete the boundaries."

It will be seen, from this carefully considered demarcation, that Khorásán proper contains one only of the cities indicated by Mr. Boulger, and accepted by thoughtful critics, as the places which should be occupied in order to gain a really safe frontier for Hindústán. This is the city of Herát. Of the remaining five, four, Maimané, Shiborgan, Takhtapul, and Khúlm, are in Afghán Turkistán; the fifth, Faiz-

ábád, is in Badakhshán. The six cities indicated thus constitute the strong places of the countries of eastern Khorásán, Afghán Turkestan, and Badakhshán—countries bearing a strong resemblance to each other in their natural features and in the habits and dispositions of their people. For many years past they have been united under, and have been devastated by, the same foreign conqueror. Alike they yearn for the rule of a master who will protect and cherish them. Their countries form the natural glacis of the great range of mountains which covers Hindustán. The Oxus forms the natural boundary of their cities and their plains. In these cities and in these plains, sheltered by the British ægis, they would flourish, a happy and contented people.

It is to these countries, dismissing from consideration the western part of Khorásán, to which I now invite attention. Their capitals, their people, the nature and the products of their soil,—their past history, their present condition, the possibilities before them,—these will, so far as is possible, be discussed in this volume. And if the discussion tend to enlighten the minds of the many regarding the condition of countries, the well-being of which is of the deepest

moment to England ; if it remove the hesitations of some, the doubts of others, the prejudices of a few, and the enforced ignorance of many, then assuredly my labours will not have been in vain.

CHAPTER III.

HERAT.

“KHORA'SA'N,” runs the Eastern proverb, “is the oyster-shell of the world, and Herát is its pearl.” This once splendid city is situated $34^{\circ} 26' N.$, $62^{\circ} 8' E.$, two thousand six hundred and fifty feet above the sea, in the valley of the river Herírúd, which runs below it. The Herírúd rises in the mountains of Hazárah, not far from the village of Robat Tarwan. Under the name of Jangal-áb, it flows in a south-westerly direction to a point below Daolatýár, a village on the direct road between Herát and Bámián. At this point it is joined by another branch, the Sir Tingaláb, which rises likewise in the Hazárah ranges, though at a point somewhat more to

the south-east than the upper branch. From the point of junction, the united rivers, taking the name of Herírúd, follow an almost direct westerly course south of the Parapomisan range and pass south of Herát. Some fifty miles beyond that city the Herírúd takes a turn to the north-west and then to the north, receiving many waters in its course, and passing Sarrakhs just to the west of it. Not far from this place it loses the name of Herírúd and assumes that of Tajand. Under this name it flows north-westward, till it is finally lost in the sand and swamps of the great Turkmán desert.

At the point already indicated, where the Herírúd receives the waters of the Sir Tangal-áb, the river traverses a broad valley, which it adorns and fertilises. All along this valley channels from the river spread over its broad surface, converting deserts into cornfields and waste land into fruit gardens. Its water is singularly bright and pure. Running swiftly, it never fails. The supply has ever been equal to the demand, even in the days when Herát was the most famous city of Central Asia, possessing alike the most brilliant court and the most splendid commercial mart in the eastern world.

The city of Herát is the principal city in this valley. According to Conolly, whose account of it is most graphic, the city is situated "at four miles distance from hills on the north, and twelve from those which run south of it. The space between the hills is one beautiful extent of little fortified villages, gardens, vineyards, and corn-fields, and this rich scene is brightened by many small streams of shining water, which cut the plain in all directions. A dam is thrown across the Herírúd, and its waters, being turned into many canals, are so conducted over the vale of Herát that every part of it is watered. Varieties of the most delicious fruits are grown in the valley, and they are sold cheaper even than at Mashad; the necessities of life are plentiful and cheap, and the bread and water of Herát are a proverb for their excellence. I really never, in England even, tasted more delicious water than that of the Herírúd: it is 'as clear as tears,' and, the natives say, only equalled by the waters of Kashmír, which make those who drink them beautiful."

Herát can boast of very great antiquity. It is mentioned by very early writers. Ibn Haukal, who

lived in the tenth century,* gives a glowing description of its citadel, its buildings, its gardens, and speaks even of a church of the Christians, probably the Nestorians. Edrisi,† who lived nearly two hundred years later, but who apparently never visited the city, wrote of it in terms not less glowing. Abulféda, who lived at Herát during the fourteenth century, adds but little to previous information. But the accounts of all these writers tend to prove how famous was the city and how magnificent were its buildings.

Ibn Batuta, who visited the city about the same time, 1340, wrote of it as the most important city in Khorásán; “a province,” he added, “which in Herát and Nishápúr possesses two most flourishing

* Ibn Haukal was the author of a valuable work on Oriental geography, published in 976. To qualify himself for writing this work he spent twenty-eight years in travelling through the Mahomedan countries of the world. The work referred to was translated from the Persian and published in an abridged form by Ouseley, in 1800.

† Edrisi was a famous Arabian geographer. He was born in 1099 and died in 1164. He was a great traveller, and published many works on the geography of the Eastern world, all of which have been translated, with commentaries, into French.

cities with fertile lands depending upon them, and two which had been so, but which lay in ruins, Balkh and Merv."

These writers testify to the great prosperity of Herát during the four hundred years of which they successively wrote. The buildings which half a century ago still remained speak of its pristine splendour. "We ascended," wrote Conolly in 1831, "by one hundred and forty steps to the top of the highest minaret, and thence looked down upon the city, and the rich gardens and vineyards round and beyond it—a scene so varied and beautiful, that I can imagine nothing like it, except perhaps in Italy." Some idea of the magnificence of the buildings and the extent of the city may be derived from the perusal of the following extract from the memoirs of the Emperor Bábar, who visited the city in 1506, and who learned there to realise some of the joys of existence. His visit, be it borne in mind, took place after the city had suffered from the ravages of Chingiz Khán and of Taimúr. "During the twenty days that I stayed in Herí,"* wrote Bábar, "I

* An ancient name of Herát. Vide Leyden's "Memoirs of Baber," page 207.

every day rode out to visit some new place that I had not seen before. My guide and proveditor in these visits was Yúsuf Ali Gokultásh, who always got ready a sort of collation, in some suitable place where we stopped. In the course of these twenty days I saw perhaps everything worthy of notice except the Khanekah (or convent) of Sultán Husén Mirza. I saw the bleaching-ground, the garden of Alí Shír Beg, the paper mills, the Takht Astáneh (or royal throne); the bridge of Káh; the Kahdastán, the Bágh-i-Nazar-gáh; the Niámat-ábád; the Khiában, or public pleasure walks; the Khatírat of Sultán Ahmad Mirza; the Takht*-i-Safar, or Safar Palace; the Takht-i-Nawai; the Takht-i-Barkír; the Takht-i-Hájí Beg; and the Takhts of Shekh Bahá-udín Umar, and Shekh Zain-udín; the mausoleum and tomb of Mulána Abdul-rahmán Jám; the Ninázgah-i-Múkhtar, or place of prayer; the fishpond; the Sák-i-Sulimán; Balméri, which was originally called Abul Walíd; the Imám Takhr; the Bágh-i-Khiábán; the colleges and tombs of the Mirza;

* The word *takht* signifies "palace."

the college of Guher-shád Bégam, her tomb, and her grand mosque; the Bágh-i-Zághán (or Raven Garden); the Bágh-i-nou (or New Garden); the Bágh-i-Zobeideh (or Zobeideh's Garden); the Aksarai, or White Palace, built by Sultán Abusaid Mirza, which is situated close by the Irák gate; Púrán and Súfeh-i-Sirandázár (the Warrior's Seat); Chirgh Alánik and Mír Wáhid; the Bridge of Málán; the Khwájeh Ták (Khwajeh's Porch), and Bágh-i-Suféd (White Garden); the Tarab-Khána (Pleasure House); the Bágh-i-Jahánará; the Kioshk and Makavi Khaneh (or Mansion of Enjoyment); the Sosni-Kháná (or Lily Palace); the Doázdeh Burj, or twelve towers; the great reservoir on the north of the Jahánará; the four edifices on its four sides; the five gates of the town walls, the King's Gate, the Irák Gate, the Firozábád Gate, the Khush Gate, and the Kipchák Gate; the King's Bázár; the Chársú or great Public Market; the college of Shekh-ul-Islám; the Grand Mosque of the Kings; the Bágh-i-Shahar, or City Garden; the College of the Badía-i-zamán Mirza, which is built on the banks of the River Anjíl; Alí Shír Bég's dwelling-house, which they call Unsiá (or Palace of Ease); his tomb and great mosque;

his college and convent, his baths and hospital ; all these I saw in the short space I had to spare." Wearisome as the repetition of names may be found, I know no other description which brings so vividly to the mind the splendour of Herát as Herát was before it had been plundered and desolated by the Afgháns.

The origin of Herát can be traced far into antiquity. To the ancients the province of which it is the capital was known as Aria and Ariana.* The name was, in the course of time, gradually changed to Herí—a name which still survives in the river

* The town of Herát has several names in Persian. It is called *Hirí*, *Hirá*, *Hiríva*, and *Hirát*; the dialect of the country, and a native thereof, are both called *Hiraví*; and anything belonging to the district is styled *Hiríva*. All these words take their origin from the sound *hir* or *har*, akin to the Bengálí word *ar-ya*, "a husbandman," and the Sanskrit *ár-ya*, "the Hindú" *par excellence*, or agriculturist as opposed to the nomad. *Ar* means "to plough," and is the same as the old English verb "to *ere*" (Lat. *errare*, to *err*, to *go*), and it was the source not only of the word *A'rya* as applied to the Hindús, but of *Ir-án*, the name of Persia itself, and of *Aria* the district of Herát, which must thus have received its very name on account of its abundant fertility and agricultural resources.

flowing to the south of it, Herírúd, the river of Herí—and later to Herát. It is mentioned by the earliest writers, and has often served as a residence of the greatest conquerors of the East. Tradition has brought here Nebuchadnezzar and Semiramis. The Persian historians assert, with a remarkable unanimity, that Alexander the Great gave it its earliest name of Artakoana. Arrian writes of it as Artakoana or Artakana, the royal city of the inhabitants of Aria. There can be no doubt, at any rate, that the city of the time of the Macedonians was the gate through which Alexander the Great passed to the conquest of India.

It is difficult to trace the history of Herát between the era of the conquest of India by Alexander (327 B.C.) and the devastation of the city by Chingiz Khán (1221–22). But if I pass over this period of fifteen hundred and fifty years more lightly than I could wish, I shall be able to dwell with more detail on the Herát of the middle ages—the Herát which commanded all the trade of Asia—to indicate the causes which led to its decline, and to show how, its place having been unappropriated by any other city, it is possible now to restore to it

its pristine splendour, to make it once again the granary and garden of Central Asia.

According to Ferishta* Khorásán with its capital Herát was conquered in 651 A.D. by Abdulla bin Amir, Governor of Basrah, for the Caliph Othman. It was then that the faith of Islám was spread throughout the border-land of Iran and Túran. In the course of a few years Khorásán and the country beyond the Oxus devolved upon the princes of the house of Samáni, whose capital was Bokhára. Towards the end of the tenth century, however, Khorásán, severed from Turánian Asia, formed part of the country which procured its independence under Sabaktaghín, father of the renowned Mahmúd of Ghazní.

What Herát was at this period I have already described.† The city was already famous for the magnificence of its buildings. The districts around it were even then proverbial for their fertility. Already Herát had become a commercial centre of

* Briggs's "Ferishta," vol. i. page 3.

† Page 38, the testimony of Ibn Haukal.

no ordinary attraction. In spite of the fact that the times were unsettled, that the border-land between Irán and Turán was frequently the battleground for empire, this prosperity never wavered. There was a magic in the situation—the centre where the roads from Bokhára, from Persia, from India converged—in its fertile and well-watered valley, that preserved Herát, even in the ordinary times of a troublous era, from devastation and plunder.

Not, however, that the fair city remained unmolested in the hands of the Ghaznivides. Whilst the most renowned of that race, the famous Mahmúd, was engaged in his raids against India, there arose in Transoxiana a family whose fame was destined to equal that of his own. Tbogrúl Bég—the son of Mikail, the son of Seljúk—the founder of the Seljúk dynasty, was born in Transoxiana in the beginning of the eleventh century. In the early portion of the second half of that century he crossed the Oxus with his followers, known in history as the Seljúkí Túrks, and, defeating the army of Masáod, son of Mahmúd of Ghazní, possessed himself of the city of Nishápúr. Recognised as king in that

city and in the districts dependent upon it, he resolved to extend his sway over all Khorásán. With this view he despatched (A.H. 429, A.D. 1038) his brother Giafar Beg to Herát. Herát was conquered. Merv, assailed by Thogrúl Beg in person, yielded to his might, and in a very short time the remainder of the province acknowledged him as Sultán. Thogrúl Beg, consigning Herát to the care of one of his uncles, made Merv the capital of the province. "Having established there his royal residence," writes the historian, "he gave new laws to all the country of Khorásán, by which all the disorders and injustice which had been perpetrated there for a long time were repressed."*

The conquest of Herát and the occupation of Khorásán by the Seljúks gave a permanent character to the population alike of the city and the province. The indigenous inhabitants would seem to have been Persians. The settlement in large numbers of the Seljúks who came with Thogrúl Béq caused the first graft of a new blood on the

* D'Herbelot.

original stock. The Moghols who subsequently came with Chingiz Khán and the Turko-Tartars who followed Taimúr still further affected the strain. The result has been the collective name of Char Aimák, and the subdivision of the people into the Jemshídí, Firúzkuhí, and Taimani or Taimúri.*

The nephew and successor of Thogrúl Beg, the renowned Alp Arslan—the prince of whom d’Herbelot records that he had seen at the foot of his throne two hundred princes or sons of princes paying him their court—retained Khorásán and Herát during his reign. He died at Merv† A.H. 465, A.D. 1072. Khorásán continued under Seljúk rule during the reigns of Málik Sháh, son of Alp-Arslan (who died A.D. 1092); of Barkiarok, son of Málik Sháh (who died A.D. 1104); of his brother, Gaiathúdín (who died A.D. 1117); and of his brother, a very famous prince, Sángiar, who died, after a glorious reign of

* Vambery’s “Travels,” page 273.

† On his tomb was placed an epitaph, of which the following is a translation: “You, all of you, who have seen the greatness of Alp-Arslan, mounting up to the skies, come to Merv, and you will see him mingled with the dust.”

forty years, in A.D. 1158. Mahmúd, a son of the sister of Sángiar, reigned, according to the historian Khondemir, five years in Khorásán after his uncle's death. At the expiration of this term one of the great lords of the country revolted against him, defeated him, and deprived him of his eye-sight. The result of this successful rebellion was the severance of Khorásán from the Seljúk dynasty. The larger portion of the province, including Herát, fell under the dominion of the Sultáns of Khwárizm (Khiva); the remainder was occupied by the rebels. Within a few years, however, the several parts were united under the rule of Muhammad Khán, King of Khwárizm, A.D. 1199. For a moment, indeed, (A.D. 1207,) Herát fell into the possession of the united forces of Mahmúd, the titular successor of the last of the Ghorian dynasty, and of Kútb-ud-dín, the founder of the slave dynasty of Hindústán; but, attempting to penetrate thence into the country now known as Afghán Turkistán, the two princes were defeated by Muhammad Khán, and dispossessed of all their conquests. From that moment till the appearance of Chingiz Khán the rule of the Sultán of Khwárizm in Herát was unquestioned.

The faint outline of the history of Herát, sufficient, perhaps, for the purposes of this narrative, is thus brought up to the year 1219. Throughout this period the prosperity of the province had been increasing. In that year it seemed assured. The records of the period assert that there were then in the city twelve thousand retail shops; six thousand public baths, caravansaries, and water-mills; three hundred and fifty schools and monastic institutions; a hundred and forty-four thousand occupied houses; and that the city was yearly visited by caravans from all parts of Asia.

This prosperity received its first terrible blow from Chingiz Khán. This conqueror, the leader of the Mongols or Moghols, having first asserted his authority over his own people, marched at their head to devastate Asia. In the course of a few years he established his supremacy over the vast country bordered in the east by China, in the north and the west by the Volga and the Caspian. Proclaimed the Great Khán of the Tartars, he, at the beginning of the year 1219, had conquered Western China, and had penetrated as far as Peking.

He then turned his arms against the kingdom of

which Herát formed a component part, and of which Muhammad Khán was the ruler. That kingdom, including, besides Herát, Bokhára, Samarkand, Khokand, Kashgár, Persia, Afghánistán, and Bilúchistán as far as the Indus, fell before the invader. Every conquered city felt the fury of his warriors. According to the Khorasáni historian, Khondemir,* a native of Herát, that city suffered by the two stormings of Chingiz Khán a loss of a million and a half of men. For there were two stormings of Herát. The city was taken and plundered by the army of Chingiz Khán in 1219. It was retaken by Jalálúddín, son of Muhammad Khán, in 1221. It was stormed a second time by the troops of Chingiz Khán in 1222.

But Chingiz Khán was a passing scourge. Twenty-nine years after the second storming of Herát, he and his successors had disappeared, and from that time

* The work of this historian, who flourished in the fifteenth century, bears a Persian title, the signification of which is, "A work which contains all the most certain and most exact details contained in authentic and accepted histories." The work traces the order of events from the creation of the world to the year 1471.

(1251) until the invasion of Taimúr—better known in Europe as Tamerlane—(1381), the granary and garden of Central Asia enjoyed under the fostering care of native rulers—the Ghorian dynasty—unchequered prosperity. Once more was the city populated; again did palaces reappear and markets reopen. Again did the city become renowned for its splendour, for its wealth and for its luxury. In the course of these hundred and thirty years the royal palaces became adorned with costly treasures; the workers in gold and silver ornaments sent their fame throughout Central Asia; the city walls were rebuilt, and the city gates ornamented with splendid carvings, fringed with the polished steel of the country. Again did Herát become the wonder of the eastern world. In that world the proverb then was universal, “Which is the most splendid city in the world? If you answer truly you must say Herát!”

But at the end of those hundred and thirty years, years of peace, prosperity, and splendour, the destroyer once more appeared. The destroyer was Tamerlane. Gathering in his own hands the guiding-reins of the Túrki tribes of Central Asia, this able warrior

setting out from Samarkand, burst suddenly, in 1381, upon Herát. He delivered the splendid city to destruction and pillage. The costly ornaments of the royal palace, the abundant supplies in the treasury, the throne, the golden crown, the ornaments of gold and silver, the precious stones, were all carried off by the conqueror; the city walls were cast down; the city gates were taken to Kesh—the birth-place of Taimúr. An enormous contribution was levied on the inhabitants. Their luxurious houses, adorned within with Kachan porcelain, were indeed allowed to stand, but many of the most learned doctors and sages of the place were transported across the Oxus. The humiliation of the city seemed 'complete.*

* That Taimúr should have allowed Herát to be sacked and plundered is a stain upon his name. The city offered no resistance. D'Herbelot expressly states that the governor of the city, finding himself incapable of offering a successful resistance, went to meet him, and paid him homage. The fact of the pillage is incontestable. It is affirmed not only by D'Herbelot, but by the Persian historians of the period. (*Vide* "Ritter, Die Erdkunde, Achter Theil.) It must not be supposed from this that Taimúr was a mere destroyer. In a careful summary of his character and career he is thus judged by Erskine: "Whatever Taimúr's descent, his high elevation was due to his own transcendent

It was not so, however. Taimúr was a statesman as well as a warrior. He recognised [at once the value of the central position he had gained in the capital of Khorásán. From that country he conquered Persia. Through the gate of Herát his armies marched to Kandahár and to Delhí. So sensible was he of its importance, that the third year after Herát had been all but demolished, he sent thither his son Mirán Sháh to reoccupy it. Many of the damages caused by the siege were then repaired. The palaces were redecorated, the character of the city as the commercial capital of Central Asia was restored; only the walls were not rebuilt. But so speedily did the city rise from its ashes, that in 1389 we find the same Mirán Sháh, who in the interval had led the armies of Taimúr into various parts of Asia, and who had then but recently been

talents. His first contests, like those of Chingiz Khán, had for their object to gain the direction of his own tribe, which, after many vicissitudes of fortune, he attained; and following up his success, after long and painful exertions he became the undisputed ruler of all Máwerannaher" (Trans-Oxiana) "and had the glory of restoring to peace and prosperity its various provinces which had long been a prey to anarchy . . . He left at his death one of the greatest empires the world ever saw."

sent to repress a revolt in the city of Tús, near the modern Nishápúr, determining to rest for a month at Herát, "to divert himself" on his way to his father's court at Samarkand.

About eight years later, 1396-7, Taimúr conferred the government of the provinces of Khorásán, Sístán, and Mazándarán, upon his fourth son, the Mirza Sháh-Rokh. Again was manifested the great value attached to Herát. "As soon," writes d'Herbelot, "as this Prince was given this government, which he held almost in sovereignty, he selected the royal city of Herát for his general residence." He resided there up to the time of his father's death in 1405,* when the rich heritage of Transoxiana and of Turkistán devolved upon him.

But once more did Herát vindicate her claims to be the Queen of eastern cities. Transoxiana boasted of many royal residences. Samarkand had been the seat of government of Taimúr, the capital of his vast dominions. But Sháh-Rokh saw in Herát a city whence he could hold fast Transoxiana, whilst

* Taimúr died in the year of the Hegira 807. Erskine renders this date A.D. 1405.

keeping in his own firm grip the key of the countries to the west, to the east, and to the south of him. He therefore sent his son Ulúgh Beg as his lieutenant to Samarkand, whilst he himself kept royal court at Herát. Virtually Herát thus became the capital of the whole of Central Asia.

This was the period of the greatest prosperity of the royal city. Sháh-Rokh has left a name which still lives in Oriental history. He rendered himself famous, not less for his military talents than for his justice, his piety, and his generosity. His reign of forty-three years is a long record of actions honourable to him, alike as a man and as a ruler. He had done much for Herát in the lifetime of his father, but after Taimúr's death he restored the fortifications, rebuilt and redecorated the gates, paying for the redecorations from his private funds.

The life of Sháh-Rokh has been narrated by the Herátí historian Abdulrazzak. His work has been translated into English, and a compendium and review of it are to be found in successive numbers of the "*Journal Asiatique*" for 1836. To give in this book all the details of a long reign would be foreign to my purpose. It will suffice to state that under

Sháh-Rokh Herát attained a prosperity greater even than that which it had enjoyed before the sacking of the city by Taimúr. So favoured, indeed, is the city in its situation, in a fertile and fruitful valley, commanding the point on which all the commercial routes of Central Asia converge, that it needs only good and beneficent administration to enable it to attain to and to sustain the very highest degree of prosperity. The history of the past eight hundred years has shown that long-continued and permanent misgovernment can alone neutralise the natural advantages possessed by Herát; and that, crushed as she may be by these, she possesses the elasticity which enables her to rebound at once when the pressure is removed.

To give the reader some idea of the magnificence of the city of Herát at this period, I cite from M. Quatremère's translation of a portion of the work of Abdulrazzáq,* the following account of the preparations made for the royal festivities on the occasion of performing the rites of circumcision on Mirza Baisangar and Muhammad Djonglú Bahádur, the two

* "Notice sur l'ouvrage qui a pour titre: a Matla Assadeïn ou Madjma Albahreïn." Paris: 1843.

sons of the Emperor Sháh-Rokh. "In the royal garden were erected tents, which had from eighty to a hundred poles, scarlet pavilions, and tents made of silk. In these tents were thrones of gold and silver, encircled by garlands of rubies and pearls. From the carpets issued vapours of amber, whilst the durbar tent was perfumed with the soothing odour of musk. Bazaars and shops, richly ornamented, recalled the beauty of the garden of Irem. Cupolas, fascinating to the eye, elegantly decorated, seemed like caskets filled with precious stones, or constellations of numberless stars. Cupbearers, on silver pedestals, with hands as white as crystal, smiling lips, and holding golden cups, gave everywhere the signal of pleasure. Singers sang to melodious tunes the songs formerly heard at the court of Sassanidæ. Skilful musicians, touching deftly the lute and the lyre, ravished the reason of the listeners. In each tent was a magnificent reception room. The diversions were prolonged for many days without interruption. The Emperor was prodigal to all, to those of low as well as to those of high rank, of his generosity and munificence. This august fête was celebrated in the city of Herát, the capital

of the kingdom, in the last days of the month of Rébi."

This great prince died A.H. 851, equivalent to A.D. 1447. He was succeeded by his son Ulúgh Bég, who for thirty-eight years had ruled as his father's lieutenant in Transoxiána. Ulúgh Bég was forced, however, to fight for Herát. His nephew, Alla uldaolat, son of the Mirza Baisangar who was one of the heroes of the fête I have described, seized that city and the districts of which it is the capital, and tried to hold it. Ulúgh Bég defeated him, however, near Balai Murgháb. He was not so fortunate a few months later in a contest with his own son, Abdul Latíf, who, rebelling and fighting against him, took him prisoner near Balkh, and caused him to be put to death. Ulúgh Bég had reigned, since his father's death, two years and nine months. He was a great prince, a lover of the sciences, especially of astronomy. The importance of Herát was in no way impaired during his reign.

His successor in Transoxiana, Abdul Latíf, survived him only six months. He was killed by his own soldiers. His cousin, Abdullah, followed, but reigned only one year, when he was dispossessed by

Abúsaid, grandson of Mírán Sháh, son of Taimúr. During these years, following the death of Ulúgh Bég, Bábar, grandson of Sháh-Rokh through Baisangar Mirza, had reigned peaceably in Herát. Bábar died in 1456. Then the Abúsaid above alluded to, who had already annexed Káshgar, Kermán, and Múltán to his empire, and who had long coveted Herát, occupied that city. He held it till the year A.H. 872, equivalent to A.D. 1468-9, when making an expedition into Irák,* he was surprised, defeated, and slain by the Turkmán chief, Hássán Bég. His death, known in history as "the calamity of Irák," was the signal for the break-up of the empire which Taimúr had founded.

For the moment Herát fell into the possession of the son of Abúsaid, Mirza Sultán Mahmúd. Mahmúd had been present at the battle in which his father had fallen, and had fled from the field after the defeat. He now came to Herát. His abode there was not, however, of long duration. Sultán Husén, son of Mán-súr, great-grandson of Taimúr, who had more or

* The greater Media of the ancients.

less successfully opposed Abúsaid during his lifetime, marched into Khorásán, conquered it, and established his seat of government at Herát.

Again, for the first time since the death of Sháh Rokh, did Herát enjoy a firm and settled government. The reign of Sultán Husén Mirza, beginning in 1470, covered thirty-five years of unexampled prosperity. Husén Mirza would have been accounted a great man in any age. To a love of the higher branches of science he added a profound knowledge of the art of governing, and he was animated by an earnest desire for the welfare of his people. Under his rule Herát became the most magnificent city in the east; Khorásán the most cultivated and the most fertile kingdom in Central Asia. The accumulating wealth of the province poured into Herát. Wealth attracted men of learning, men of science, men of literature. Under such auspices culture rapidly developed. The fame of the city spread throughout the east. Its central position attracted merchants from all lands. The natural resources of the province were developed in an extraordinary manner. Khorásán became the milch cow of Central Asia, Herát her magnificent capital.

Shah Husén Mirza died in 1505. The prosperity of his country had excited the envy of the neighbouring princes and people, and his sons, amiable and agreeable though they were, had been born in the purple. But the times were threatening. An Uzbek chief, lineally descended from Chingiz Khán, Sheibání Khan, better known in history as Sháhí Bég, chief of the Turkí Uzbeks, and who, after a life of adventure, had conquered a great part of Transoxiana and the kingdom of Khiva, was at the time threatening the gate of India. The sons of Sháh Husén Mirza, reared in the purple, were not the men to meet a dangerous crisis, and it happened that to the danger of invasion was at this moment added the greater danger of a disputed succession.

The eldest son of Sháh Husén Mirza was Badi-al-zamán Mirza; the son of his favourite wife was called Mozaffar Husén Mirza. It was between these two that the contention for the succession arose. In the presence, however, of a common danger, that of invasion, they had the good sense to enter into a compromise, and to agree to a joint sovereignty.

It was just after this arrangement had been concluded that the renowned Bábar, the founder of the

Moghol Empire in India, came to Herát on a visit. Bábar was distantly related to the princes. He was fifth in descent on his father's side from Taimúr, and twelfth on his mother's side from Chingiz Khán. At this time he was King of Kábul and Ghazní. Previously to his death Sháh Husén Mirza had invited him to visit Herát, and Bábar was on his way thither, and had reached Kahmerd,* when he heard of the death of the Sháh.

Bábar remained at Kahmerd till the dissensions to which I have alluded were appeased. He then continued his journey, joined the two princes on the banks of the Murgháb, and became their guest in camp, and subsequently in Herát.

Of his visit Bábar has left a long and interesting account in his memoirs. He detected at once the utter unfitness of his hosts for the arts of war and of government. "Although very accomplished at the

* It is interesting to trace the course followed by Bábar from Kábul to Herát. He took the route of Ghorband and Shibrtu. From Ushtar-Shahr he proceeded to Zohák and Gumbazak, descending by Saighán and the Dendán Shikn Pass to Kahmerd. The more southerly route he took on his return is described in the last chapter of this book.—*Vide* "Erskine," vol. i., page 239.

social board," he wrote, "or in the arrangement of a party of pleasure, and although they had a pleasing talent for conversation and society, they possessed no knowledge whatever of the conduct of a campaign or of warlike operations, and were perfect strangers to whatever related to the arrangements of a battle or the dangers and spirit of a soldier's life." In fact, though every consideration required that a forward move should be made in the direction of Balkh to repel the Uzbeks, no such move was made. Bábar not only counselled it, but offered to lead it. But doubt and hesitation ruled the councils of the princes, and they waited till it was too late.

The princes then endeavoured to induce Bábar to return with them to Herát. He was unwilling to be so long absent from Kábul, but in the end he consented. "I could not say No," he writes, "in the face of the Mirzas, and consented to remain. One reason that influenced me was that so many kings had come to urge my stay; a second, that in the whole habitable world there was not such another city as Herí (Herát)." He stayed a month at Herát and tasted of its pleasures. But, if he

learned there to drink wine, he saw there, by the example of the princes, how over-indulgence in it was apt to render unfit for affairs those who partook of it too freely. He foresaw that the princes, his hosts, who did so, would not be able to retain for long the inheritance of their father.

In forming this judgment Bábar displayed his customary acumen. He started on his return journey to Kábul in the height of winter. No sooner had that winter been succeeded by the early spring than Sháhí Bég' entered Khorásán. The two kings who had fêted Bábar moved from Herát and took up a position at Bába Khákí. Here they remained for some time, a prey to the divided counsels which were the necessary consequences of divided authority. Whilst they were still disputing, Sháhí Bég, advancing on the line on which General Kaufmann will march from the Oxus, made a flank march and seized Sarrakhs, then, as now, an important position, and on the direct caravan road to the capital. The move was fatal to the two kings. They appreciated the enormous consequences to Herát of the possession by their enemy of a place so important, in a strategical point of view, as Sarrakhs. They at once broke up

their army and abandoned Herát. That capital city fell at once into the possession of Sháhí Bég. The dynasty of Taimúr thus succumbed in Khorásán without striking a blow.

Sháhí Bég retained his conquest only four years. Those years were spent by him in completing the subjugation of Khorásán, in besieging and taking Kandahár, in waging a not altogether successful campaign against the Kaizák Uzbéks, and in an unprofitable expedition against the Hazáras. But in the fourth year he himself was threatened by Ishmáíl, Sháh of Persia.

Ishmáíl, founder of the Safví dynasty of Persia, was one of the most renowned characters of Oriental history. "He was endowed," writes d'Herbelot, "with a courage unparalleled. In the greatest dangers he was intrepid, terrible and formidable to his enemies. He enforced military discipline with severity, and was so ambitious that he was in the habit of saying, 'One God for the Heavens and one Monarch for the Earth.'" Such was the prince who, having established himself in Persia and in part of Arabia, now threatened the ruler of Khorásán with a formidable army.

Threatening, and receiving no submission, Ishmáíl acted. He invaded Khorásán and marched on Mashad. Sháhí Bég, leaving a small force to defend Herát, directed his remaining troops to concentrate at Merv. There, on the 2nd December 1510, he encountered the Persian army. It was the contest for empire between the Uzbék and the Kazzalbásh. The Kazzalbásh won. Sháhí Bég was completely defeated and slain.

“Immediately after this decisive battle,” writes Erskine, “the Uzbéks retired in every direction from Khorásán. Sháh Ishmáíl soon after repaired to Herát, where he spent the winter. His first care was to introduce the observances of the Shiah sect into his new dominions; and, as he was met by a bigotry and firmness equal to his own, he did not accomplish that object without a severe and cruel persecution, in the course of which the blood of many men eminent for their piety and their virtues flowed, and many distinguished names were added to the list of martyrs for the pure Sunní faith.”*

With the conquest of Herát by Persia the greater glory of the city departed. The Persian monarch

* Erskine's "Life of Baber," vol. i. page 305.

transferred the government seat of Khorásán first to Tús—a city now fallen into decay, seventeen miles from the modern Mashad—and subsequently to Mashad. To foster the prosperity of this last-named town the efforts of the court of the Safvis were strenuously devoted. Situated in a fertile valley, varying in extent from twelve to thirty miles, Mashad seemed to offer almost every advantage required by a capital. A river runs to the north and north-east of the town, which is, on the whole, well built and well arranged. It failed, however, in one most essential point. Lying two hundred and twenty-eight miles westward of Herát, it was removed by that distance from the point where all the commercial roads of the East, one only excepted, converged. The defect was fatal. An officer of the Engineers in India, to whom the marking out of a certain line of railway had been entrusted, took the line at a distance of some four to eight miles from the principal towns on the route. When remonstrated with, he remarked that it did not signify, as the towns would come to the railway. He was wrong; the towns did not come to the railway. The princes of the Safvi dynasty acted on the principle which guided the decision of the engineer,

They beautified and subsidised Mashad, whilst they utterly neglected Herát, believing that by so acting the trade would abandon Herát and come to Mashad. But the eternal law which decrees that commerce shall find the quickest and cheapest route, and, finding, shall adhere to it until another route, quicker and cheaper, shall be found; which, when the route by the Cape of Good Hope was discovered, abandoned the time-honoured markets of Venice; which, now that the route by the Suez Canal has been made practicable, is seeking, and if we English do not keep our eyes open, will find, to our detriment, a cheaper and a shorter route to the markets of the world;—that law foiled the plans of the Saffvis. Mashad, though petted as Trieste was petted by the Austrians when they held that city and Venice, did not supersede Herát. But, nevertheless, Herát suffered. The city, once so splendid, once the capital of a kingdom, was neglected and oppressed. It is true that Sháh Ishmáíl, after he had incorporated Khorásán with Persia, twice visited the city. His first visit, and the wretched persecutions of which it became the consequence, I have already noticed. He resided there a second time in 1511, after he had ex-

pelled the Uzbéks from Khwárizm (the kingdom of Khiva). But the death of Ishmáil in 1523, and the succession of a boy prince, Shah Tahmásp, revived the hopes of the Uzbéks. They raised an army the same year, and laid siege to Herát.

This was the first of the long sieges which the city sustained. It was defended by the governor of the province, Durmish Khán Shámlú, with extraordinary courage. Every attack was foiled, and after many attempts to gain the city, made during a period of seven months, the Uzbéks were forced to beat a retreat.

But the retreat provided but a respite for Herát. The following year death carried off not only the brave governor I have mentioned, but the governor of Mashad likewise, and Khorásán was left without a head. The Uzbéks took advantage of this double disaster to renew their invasion. Crossing the Oxus at Charjúi, they marched on and captured Merv and Sarrahs; they then attacked Mashad. Mashad fell after a desperate resistance.* Tús,

* "Erskine," page 457; but Bábar says, in his "Memoirs," that "Mashhad, having no means of defence, submitted."

which Mashad had even then supplanted, was next attacked. After a siege of eight months Tús capitulated on terms. In spite of the terms, however, all the men in the place were massacred and the women carried away captive.*

In consequence of events in other quarters calling away the attention of the Uzbék leader, Herát was for the moment spared the horrors of a siege. Only, however, for the moment. In 1527 the Uzbéks laid siege to it. The city was defended by Husén Khán Shámlú, a man bold, daring, and fertile in resources. During seven months he repulsed every assault. Provisions then began to fail. To feed his garrison, and thus to prolong the defence, he forced the inhabitants to yield up their supplies. Even then he was reduced to the last extremity, when Sháh Tahmasp, defeating the Uzbéks at Damghán, and advancing rapidly on Mashad to cut off the retreat of the army besieging Herát, forced its leader to raise the siege. A few weeks later, 26th September 1528, Sháh Tahmasp encountered and completely defeated the Uzbéks at Jám, a town nearly midway

* Bábar's "Memoirs," page 348.

between Mashad and Herát. The battle was one of the best contested of the age, and is referred to with justifiable pride by Persian historians as illustrative of the manner in which Persian troops, well drilled and well led, can and will fight.*

The year following, the Uzbéks, recovering from their defeat, once more invaded Khorásán and took Mashad. They then moved on Herát. Herát withstood them for seven months, and then, hopeless of succour, capitulated. But the triumph of the Uzbéks was short-lived. The following year, however, (1530), Sháh Tahmasp advanced with an army, and recovered the whole of Khorásán. But Herát was again attacked by the Uzbéks, and again relieved by Sháh Tahmasp towards the end of the same year. Sháh Tahmasp wintered in the neighbourhood, and for the two following years the city enjoyed peace.

* The Persian army numbered only forty thousand men; but they were veterans trained to service in the Ottoman wars. They possessed a fine artillery, two thousand trained artillerymen, and six thousand matchlockmen. The Uzbéks, according to the lowest calculations, numbered one hundred and five thousand men.—*Vide* "Erskine," vol. i. pages 490-91.

But events happened, then, which exposed Herát to a danger greater than any it had encountered since the days of Taimúr. It had enjoyed the two years of tranquillity of which I have spoken, under the rule of Sám Mirza, son of Sháh Tahmasp. This prince, irritated by the slaughter, by order of his father, of the Shámlú tribe of which his two governors, when he was a child, had been members and his present minister actually was a member, determined to conquer Kandahár, and to erect it, with Herát, into an independent principality.

Sám Mirza accordingly marched on and besieged Kandahár. The siege had lasted eight months, when Kámrán Mirza, son of Bábar, advanced to the relief of the town and defeated the Persian prince, who fled with difficulty to Tabbas.

The departure of Sám Mirza on this expedition had left Khorasán exposed to the Uzbéks. They seized their opportunity, and in the middle of 1536 laid siege to Herát.

Herát had but a small garrison. The officer who commanded it endeavoured to enlist the townspeople in its defence. They were not unwilling, but the severities of the commander soon disgusted them

with military service, and they began to yearn for the end,—even, it is said, to intrigue with the Uzbéks. But for five months the siege continued. The city had been unprovided for such a contingency, and the inhabitants suffered all the miseries of war and famine. At length, three hundred Uzbéks having gained entrance by night into a bastion, it is said by treachery, the city was taken. All the horrors of a storm followed. The garrison fled to the citadel, which, however, was a few days later yielded to the Uzbéks, under terms which were violated.

Four months later, 1537, Sháh Tahmasp recovered Herát, the Uzbéks retreating on his advance. Their retreat was a final one. Never again was Herát molested by the Uzbéks, and during the period of more than a century and a half that followed, the city enjoyed peace, and was able, by the unrivalled advantages of its position, to sustain on more than equal terms the growing commercial opposition of Mashad.

Some idea of the quick revival of the prosperity of Herát may be gathered from the visit paid to it in 1544, seven years only after the final departure of the Uzbéks, by the Emperor Humáyun, then a

fugitive from India, and repulsed from Afghánistán by his brother Kámrán. Humáyun had been hospitably received in Sístán by the Persian governor, and had been invited by him to proceed to Irák and the Persian Court. The reputation of Herát for splendour and magnificence so attracted the royal fugitive that he asked for and obtained permission to take that city and Mashhad on his way. The glories of this visit are recorded at length in the Akbarnáma. As Humáyun approached Herát, the entire population of the city poured out, and covered the hills and plains, the trees and house-tops, as he passed along. He was received with the magnificent courtesy such as a royal prince, not a fugitive, might have looked for. He was lodged in the royal palace. A magnificent entertainment was provided for him in the Jahánará gardens. The eldest son of the Sháh paid him royal honours. Nothing was wanting to the dignity and grandeur of the reception.

Humáyun stayed a month at Herát. Notwithstanding its sieges and its misfortunes since the time of the visit paid to it by Bábar, just after the death of Sháh Husén Mirza, it was still one of the finest cities in the east. So Humáyun found it. The

impressions made upon him during his stay there were neither effaced nor weakened by the later glories of his reign.

From this date to the year 1715 Herát shared the fortunes of the Persian monarchy. Administered by a Persian governor, with the sole object of advancing the interests of Persia, often to the detriment of its own, the city was neglected and its prosperity declined. During this period, Mashad, on the other hand, made rapid strides. The illustrious monarch, Sháh Abbás the Great, who ruled for forty-six years—from 1582 to 1628—devoted himself to push the fortunes of the new capital of Khorásán. His policy was a policy of sentiment. He had made the city of Ispahán the capital of his dominions, and had adorned it with magnificent and useful buildings. The population of the city more than doubled during his reign. From Ispahán to Mashad the distance is nearly two hundred parasangs, or nearly eight hundred miles. Mashad had a great attraction for the King on account of its containing the tomb of the saintly Imám Alí Rézá, and he visited it frequently. On one occasion he walked the entire distance, followed by the chief

officers of his court. It can easily be conceived how his love for the city led him to make it worthy of the place it held in his affections. He beautified it as he had beautified Ispahán. He endeavoured by all means to make it the commercial capital of his empire. The money he spent upon it attracted capitalists and merchants. The trade route to China passed through its streets. But Mashad never became a centre. Mashad never entirely superseded the neglected Herát. The palaces in that city might remain unoccupied, but the caravansarais continued full to repletion. Merchants from all parts of the world still met in her great Chársú, and the manufactures of the East and of the West were still exchanged within her gates.

Abbás the Great died. From the date of his death in 1628 till the accession of the last of his dynasty, Sultán Husén, in 1694, the history of Herát is a blank. The policy of exalting Mashad continued, to the detriment of the beauty, but without materially affecting the credit, of the real commercial capital. But with the accession of Sultán Husén began a new era—the era of dismemberment for Persia, and no long time elapsed before Herát, with all the sen-

sitiveness peculiar to commerce, felt the consequences of his relaxed rule.

Dwelling in the Hazára country, vassals of Persia, and immediately subject to the governor of Herát, were the Afgháns of the Abdálí tribe. Up to the beginning of the eighteenth century these rude mountaineers were content to be vassals and nothing more than vassals. To humour them Sháh Abbás the Great had consented that they should be ruled over by the chief of their own tribe, subject to the supervision of the governor of Herát. But this wise rule had been departed from by the successors of Abbás the Great. Persian lords, favourites of the Court, were often sent to control the chiefs; and the corrupt action of these men tended to excite angry feelings in men who, till then, had never thought of rebellion.

A shameful act of a shameless man brought, in 1717, matters to a crisis. The Persian Governor of Herát, Muhammad Zumán Khán, offered to Azád-úlla Khán, son of the chief of the Abdális, one of those insults which can only be atoned by blood. The father, horrible to say, was privy to the insult. It stirred Azádúlla Khán to fury. He slew his father,

and then marching at the head of the warriors of his tribe, by whom he had been proclaimed chief, attacked, defeated, and killed Muhammad Zumán Khán in the Zamindawár; then pushing on for Herát, seized it, and declared it independent of Persia!

Thus it was that the great commercial centre of the East fell into the possession of the rude Afgháns. It was just as if the kilted Highlanders who had followed Prince Charlie to Derby in 1745 had pushed on, occupied London, and declared their determination to rule the capital thenceforth after the fashion of the mountain! The effect on Herát has been the more disastrous inasmuch as the occupation has been permanent. The heavy hand of the rude and uncultivated boor has pressed, for more than a century and a half, upon the more refined races which peopled the beautiful city. And with what result? Hear Vambéry, who visited Herát in 1863. "It needs only some attack, no matter by whom, to be made upon Herát for the Herátí to be the first to take up arms against the Afgháns!" They are, of their own action, taking up arms against the Afgháns now!

Before I endeavour to show how it is that Herát

has not absolutely succumbed under the desolating sway of the Afghán foreigner, I shall describe in a few words the *modus operandi* of that sway. I shall, in the first instance, quote Ferrier, a writer quick to see the good points of an Asiatic people, and not without sympathy for certain sides of the Afghán character. "In Afghánistán," writes Ferrier, including in that title Herát and the other provinces ruled by the successors of Ahmad Sháh Durání, "the ideas and objects of the government and the governed are wholly different; there each man thinks only of destruction and disorganisation; it is, who shall labour least, or who shall enrich himself the most, and by the most culpable means. The depositaries of power, instead of leading those under them in the right path, instead of giving them, by their own conduct, a good example, and ameliorating the condition of the people, load them with exactions, and enrich themselves at their cost. This system of spoliation and embezzlement is practised by functionaries of every class."

The remarks which follow apply rather to the masses of Afgháns than to the indigenous population of cities, such as Herát, which the Afgháns

hold by right of conquest. How the policy is applied to Herát is told by Vambéry. "Instead of seeking to heal the wounds they (the Afgháns) have inflicted, their miserable policy seems now to aim at reducing the whole province still further to beggary." Speaking of the affection felt by the Herátí's for Major d'Arcy Todd, Vambéry writes further on: "The Herátí saw, during the government of Major Todd, more earnestness and self-sacrifice with respect to the ransoming of slaves than they had ever even heard of before on the part of a ruler. *Their native governments had habituated them to be plundered and murdered, not spared or rewarded.*"

But nothing affords a greater proof of the misgovernment of the province than the exactions and restrictions placed upon trade. Every man, from the governor down to the meanest official, plunders the arriving caravan. "The Afghán functionary," writes Vambéry, alluding to the custom-house official, "threw into the shade all the inhumanity and barbarity of similar officers in Central Asia." The details follow. Poor wretches, who had been plundered sufficiently before, were compelled, on reaching Herát, to yield up their very asses to be sold !

But, it may be asked, what is it which has enabled Herát to maintain her commercial position during a century and a half of foreign oppression such as that which I have described? It was not alone the character of the people. The Turko-Persian race which constitutes the bulk of the population have, indeed, lost everything under the Afghán scourge, except their dexterity and their patience. Confiding in the glorious position of which their oppressors could not deprive them, they have been content to wait. But it was, in the main, that position which has saved Herát. During those long years the caravans traversed Persia and Mashad; Bokhára, Merv, and Murgháb; Shikárpúr and Kandahár; all to centre in Herát. The people clung to their callings, and though bowed down by taxes and by plunder, still maintained the old lines of traffic, confident that it needed only the smallest encouragement to enable those lines to resume their former importance, and hoping always that prosperous times would return.

It was not from misgovernment only that Herát has suffered during this terrible period of more than a hundred and sixty years. In 1731 the city was

besieged by Nádír Sháh, on whom, in gratitude for the expulsion of the Afgháns from Persia, Sháh Tahmasp had bestowed four of the finest provinces of his kingdom, one of these being Khorásán. Nádír pushed the siege of Herát with his accustomed energy, and soon forced it to surrender. The capture of Herát enabled the conqueror to march on Kandahár and subsequently on India. On the death of Nádír Shah in 1749, the Afghán chief of the Abdálí tribe, Ahmad Khán, afterwards known as Ahmad Shah Durání, took the city by storm. Since that time it has been the scene of many desperate struggles for supremacy on the part of Afghán pretenders ; twice—in 1838 and in 1855—has it been besieged by a Persian army. Nine years after the last siege it succumbed to the Amír Dost Muhammad. Since that period the city has had to contend only against the tyranny of Afghán misrule.

Of two of the three sieges referred to a slight description seems necessary, as showing how the position of Herát enables it to make a determined stand even against a formidable enemy. The reader who has so far accompanied me will have observed that none of the sieges sustained by Herát were of short

duration. In the middle ages the city resisted the greatest conquerors of the day for periods of seven and more months. When in comparative decay it baffled Nádír Sháh for four months, and about a century later it offered, under the inspiring lead of a British officer, a successful resistance to the army of Persia, led by the king of that country, influenced by Russian advisers, and strengthened by a regiment composed mainly of Russians, commanded by Russian officers.

The first Persian siege of Herát began on the 23rd November 1837. It lasted till the 9th September 1838. During that time several assaults were delivered. So great was the superiority in numbers and in *matériel* of the besiegers that each of those assaults ought to have succeeded. "It is my firm belief," wrote the Englishman who was the soul of the defence, the gallant Eldred Pottinger, "that Muhammad Sháh might have carried the city by assault the very first day he reached Herát, and that even when the garrison gained confidence, and were flushed with the success of their sorties, he might have, by a proper use of the reserves at his disposal, taken the place in twenty-four hours."

Of all the assaults, that made on the 24th June more nearly than any other obtained success. At four points the attack was repulsed; on the fifth it had, but for one man, succeeded. In the glowing pages of the historian* of the first war in Afghánistán the reader who cares to know what it is possible for one brave man to accomplish, will find recorded how it was that one Englishman was able to inspire with a portion of his own dauntless nature the Afgháns who, but for him, would have resigned the city to the enemy. It was so throughout the siege, even to the very last day. Never was the influence of England more conspicuous than when, on the 9th September, the baffled Sháh mounted his horse to return to Tehrán.†

The second siege of Herát by Persia began in the

* Kaye's "History of the War in Afghánistán," Fourth Edition, vol. i. pages 211 to 300.

† "There was one true soldier in Herát, whose energies never failed him; and History delights to record the fact that that one true soldier, young and inexperienced as he was, with no knowledge of active warfare that he had not derived from books, rescued Herát from the grasp of the Persian monarch, and baffled the intrigues of his great northern abettor."—Kaye's "History of the Afghán War."

autumn of 1855 and ended in the spring of 1856 by the surrender of the city to the besiegers. This time there was no Pottinger in the place; the supply of provisions was scanty; and the inhabitants had so great a detestation of their Afghán masters that they welcomed the Persians. But the action of England in the Persian Gulf in 1855-56 forced Persia to let her hold and to restore Herát to the Afghán. The city, though under Afghán sway, remained distinct from the ruler of Kábul till 1863, when it was taken by the Amír Dost Muhammad. Since that year it has been governed by lieutenants of the successors of that prince.

Such, in brief outline, is the political history of Herát. A glance at the record will show the reader that from time immemorial the city was regarded as an outlying bulwark, the possession of which was necessary prior to attempting the conquest of India; the holding of which by India, or by quasi-vassal powers dependent on India, would render impossible an invasion of that country. It was so considered by Alexander, by Mahmúd and his successors, by Chingiz Khán, by Taimúr, by Nádír Sháh, by Ahmad Sháh, and by Muhammad Sháh, the Persian prince

who attacked it in 1837. In the cases of all but the last, the possession of Herát led to the conquest of India; in the case of the last, the successful defence of that city rendered invasion impossible.

The hasty reader may object—what can the possession of one single city signify? A question of this nature touches the real point of the argument. Herát is called the gate of India, because through it, and through it alone, the valleys can be entered which lead to the only vulnerable part of India. Those valleys, running nearly north and south, are protected to the east by inaccessible ranges, to the west by impracticable deserts. No invading army would dare to attempt to traverse the great salt desert, and the desert immediately south of it, the Dasht-i-Naubád, whilst a British army held Herát. As long as that army should hold Herát, so long would an invasion of India be impossible. In his masterly lecture at the Royal United Service Institution in November, 1878, General Hamley laid down the broad principle that if England were to hold the western line of communication with India, that by Herát and Kandahár, she need not trouble herself much about the eastern or Kábul line. On the same occasion, Sir Henry Raw-

linson declared, in reply to a question put to him by Lord Elcho, that rather than allow the occupation of Herát by Russia, he would venture the whole might of British India. That high authority saw clearly, what I have feebly endeavoured to demonstrate in these pages, that the possession of Herát by Russia means the possession of the one line by which India can be invaded; that the possession of Herát by England means the annihilation of all the Russian hopes of an invasion of India. To place the matter in as clear a light as possible, I will take a homely illustration. Let the reader imagine—that which is actually true at the moment—that Kandahár is the frontier British station; that between Herát and Kandahár is a long lane, so protected on both sides that the man who may wish to traverse any part of it to Kandahár must enter by Herát. Is it not obvious that the power which shall hold Herát will completely dominate the lane? It is this which makes the possession of Herát by England a matter of vital consequence.

Another fact illustrates the enormous value of Herát. Place an army there, and nothing need be brought to it from Europe. Within the limits

of the Herátí territory all the great roads leading on India converge. The mines of the Herátí district supply lead, iron, and sulphur; the surface of many parts of the country is laden with saltpetre; the willow and the poplar, which make the best charcoal, abound; the fields produce in abundance corn, and wine, and oil. From the population, attracted to its new rulers by good government, splendid soldiers might be obtained. Its conquest would be the first step to the enlistment of that splendid Turkmán cavalry which, for ages, has been the terror of Persia, and which has recently displayed its prowess by repulsing the advance of Russia.

Such are the military advantages presented by Herát to the power that shall occupy it. Should that power be an enemy, Herát would be to him an eye to see and an arm to strike. An eye to pry into every native court of Hindústán, to watch the discontents and the broodings of the rulers, the heart-burnings of their subordinates. From watching and noting to fermenting and stirring up there is but one short step. Every court, every bazaar, in India, would note the presence on the frontier, in a position not only unassailable, but becoming every day

more and more capable of assailing, of a first-class power, the secret enemy of England, and professing the most unselfish anxiety to relieve them in their distress. An arm to strike—because a few years of intelligent rule would render the valley of the Herírúd capable of supporting and equipping an army strong enough even to invade India.

In a third sense, likewise, the possession of Herát by an enemy would be not less dangerous to England. The roads converging on it, already alluded to, are traversed by caravans to which no other route is available. We may be sure that the city which successfully resisted the rivalry of Mashad when Mashad was backed by all the influence of the Sháhs of Persia, will take a still higher position when supported by the might either of England or of Russia. The European power whose influence shall be paramount in Herát will gain the markets of Central Asia. More even than that. The possession of Herát by Russia means the exclusion of England from the markets of Central Asia. What those markets are I shall consider in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

*HERÁT:**THE GRANARY AND GARDEN OF CENTRAL ASIA.*

WHAT are the markets of Central Asia? They are the markets which, of all countries in the world, England is best able to supply. The people of those countries have plenty of raw material. Khorásán produces wool, but she cannot use it. Cotton goods she has not; leather she possesses only in small quantities. The articles which form the staple of the shipments to India are all needed in Central Asia. Civilisation is never wholly dead in a country in which it once has flourished, and it must ever be remembered that the country of which Herát is the centre gave, four hundred years ago, the law in civilisation to all the countries in its vicinity. Herát was then as far

in advance of Dehli as Calcutta is now of Herát. But the influences which have made of the little village of Chattanatti the capital of India can restore to Herát more than its former greatness.

The actual products of the Herát valley are assa-fætida, saffron, pistacchio-nuts, fruits of all sorts, gum-mastic, manna, wheat, barley, and other descriptions of corn. "The population of the province must now be great," wrote Conolly in 1831, "and were this fertile country settled and equitably governed, there would be scarcely bounds to the produce." The grapes he describes as particularly luscious. "The cultivators of this 'happy valley,' " he records in the same chapter,* "enumerate, if I remember right, seventeen different sorts of grapes which they grow;—the marble and the raisin grape, that which is translucent and without seeds, the golden grape of Kas-vine, and the small red grape of Badakhshán, with other temptingly named varieties of this delicious fruit. The vines are planted in the trenches, and trained over a sloping bank of earth, on which they are suffered to ripen."

* Conolly's "Travels to the North of India," vol. ii. page 5.

Horses abound in this part of Khorásán and are exported annually in large numbers. They are, if small, yet hardy, enduring, and with plenty of bone. Ferrier pronounces them to be "splendid animals, probably the finest and most capable of enduring fatigue in Central Asia." Cattle of all kinds, sheep, and goats abound. Wild asses swarm in the plains. The skins of the sheep and lambs form a large article of commerce. Brought into the city, they are made up into caps and cloaks, and returned so made up into the districts. The cowhides are not so plentiful. "There were, if I remember right," writes Conolly, "more than one hundred and fifty shoemakers' shops in the city, but they were unable to supply the demands from the province, and many camel-loads of ready-made slippers were brought from Kandahár, where they are manufactured in great quantities. The leather comes from Hindústán."

Another of the staple articles of manufacture in Herát is the carpet. The Herátí carpet is famed above all others for the brilliancy and permanency of its colours. These carpets are made in all sizes and at all prices from one pound sterling to a hundred pounds. The trade, which owing to the unsettled

state of affairs on the frontier, has declined of late years, could easily be revived. Conolly pronounced the best pieces he saw to equal the Turkey carpets, and their price to be moderate.

Silk is abundant in the valley. It is reeled from the cocoon, then dyed, twisted, and woven. Most of it, writes Captain Marsh, who visited the city in 1872, is sent to Mashad and Kábul, in the shape of yarn. The silk stuffs are much esteemed.

The hills in the vicinity yield lead, iron, and silver. The mines have been worked up to the present time in the most perfunctory manner. Sháh Kámrán, who ruled over Herát during the second quarter of the present century, was so sensible of the enormous advantages which might be derived from properly working the lead and iron mines, that he urgently requested Dr. Gerard, who visited Herát in 1832, to return, with the permission of his Government, for that express purpose. The scimitars and cutlery made from the ore already obtained from the surface are famous throughout Central Asia, and are greatly valued.

The existence of the silver mines rests on the authority of Ibn Haukal and Edrísí. These writers

place the "Silver Mountain," as it is called by the former, on the road to Sarrakhs, near Kan and Kawákír. Edrísí states that the working of the mine had been abandoned on account of its great depth, and by reason also of the scarcity of firewood in the vicinity.

Fraser, who visited Herát in 1824, whilst giving in detail the several articles of produce to which I have referred, adds that from the information he had collected there and in Persia, it had been proved that in spite of the revolutions which had desolated the country, Herát still continued to prosper. "Indeed," he adds, "every one agreed in assuring me that no place in Persia, except Ispahán, could at all compare with it in size or population."

The cause of this permanence of prosperity is the same, according to this experienced traveller, as that which I have endeavoured to trace in these pages. It will bear repetition. "Herát," adds Fraser,* "owes its prosperity to the great commerce it enjoys, being the only channel of communication between

* "A Journey into Khorásán," by James B. Fraser. London: 1825.

the east and the west of Asia ; all the trade and produce of Kábul, Kashmír, and India, on the one side, and of Bokhára, Persia, Arabia, Turkey, and even Europe, on the other, must pass through this city, and, consequently, the richest productions of all these countries centre and are exchanged in its bazaars."

This prosperity suffered greatly under the insatiable avarice of the Afghán. Mohun Lál, a Dehlí múnshi, who accompanied Dr. Gerard in 1832, and who enjoyed opportunities often denied to a European, wrote in that year: "since Kámrán's dynasty the commerce of Herát has fallen to nothing. The caravans are plundered, as we ourselves were witness of. The resident merchants are fined in a large sum of money upon any foolish pretext of the Government." Yet so elastic is the position, that with the cessation of the tyrannical rule, prosperity has at once revived. On Kámrán's death, his vizier, Yár Muhammad, who had murdered him, succeeded, after a short interval, to the throne. It became the cue of this usurper to win the Herátís. He won them by securing their commerce. "The town of Herát," says Ferrier, writing of this period, "destroyed by the siege of 1838, rose by degrees from

its ruins, thanks to the gold that the English had so profusely scattered around them; Yár Muhammad continued the improvements, and applied prompt remedies to the evils under which the population still suffered. He especially encouraged agriculture and commerce, placed a very light duty upon the sale of corn and the necessities of life, and further relieved the poorer classes by setting them to work to rebuild the fortifications of the town. . . . Finally, he completely checked the pillage that had been carried on, not only in the principality, but even up to the gates of Herát." Naturally, trade revived as if by magic. A little later, however, civil war broke out, prohibitive duties were reimposed, and the caravans were again plundered.

I proceed now to give a brief description of Herát as it now is.

The latest English traveller who has actually visited Herát is Captain Marsh, who proceeded thither from Mashad in 1872. Captain Marsh thus describes the outer city. "The walls," he writes,*

* "A Ride through Islam," by Captain Marsh. Tinsley Brothers: 1877.

“have been so often knocked down and rebuilt, that the present ones are built on the top of a high mound of vast thickness, the accumulated debris of a hundred generations. The ditch is very deep and broad, and can be filled with water from the river at a short notice. There are five gates, all of which are level with the country outside, consequently much lower than the actual walls. The ark” (citadel) “stands out very prominently; and on the outer slope of the mound, between the ditch and the walls, are two covered ways, or *faussebraye*, one commanding the other; and, lastly,—the walls themselves are well flanked by large bastions—a place of vast strength when commanded by a resolute garrison. The circumference of the city is about a farsak” (nearly four miles), “the interior nearly a mile square. It is commanded by two elevations about eight hundred to one thousand yards distant, Mosulla and Thaleberghy; but from neither can the interior of the city be actually seen, they being only on a level with the walls. Both these elevations are covered with ruins and remnants of forts, and the former with the magnificent ruins of the mosque and tomb of Sultán Húsén Mirza, one of the House of Taimúr,

of the fifteenth century, the elegant minars of which I saw long before I arrived at this city, and said to have been partially destroyed by Chingiz Khán."

As an adjunct, in one sense even as a contrast, read the following picturesque description by Vambéry (1863). "We entered," writes the observant Hungarian,* "by the gate Dervaze Arak. The houses which we passed, the advanced works, the very gate, looked like a heap of rubbish. Near the latter, in the inside of the city, is the Ark (citadel), having, from its elevation, served as a mark for the Afghán artillery; it lies there blasted and half demolished. The doors and windows have been stripped of their woodwork, for during the siege the inhabitants suffered most from a scarcity of fuel. In the bare openings of the walls are perched here and there a few wretched-looking Afgháns or Hindús—worthy guards of such a ruin. Each step we advance we see greater indications of devastation. Entire quarters of the town remain solitary and abandoned. The bazaar, that is to say, the arched part of it, where

* "Travels in Central Asia," by Arminius Vambéry." London: 1864. Murray.

the quadrangle of the bazaar is united by its dome, and which has witnessed and resisted so many sieges—alone remains, and affords, in spite of its new population, dating only three months ago,* a really interesting sample of Oriental life—a blending of the characteristics of India, Persia, and Central Asia, better defined than even in the bazaar of Bokhára. It is only from the karavansarai Hádji Resul to that of No that a throng, rightly so called, exists; and although the distance is small, the eye is bewildered by the diversity of races—Afgháns, Indians, Tartars, Turkmáns, Persians, and Jews. The Afghán parades about, either in his national costume, consisting of a long shirt, drawers, and dirty linen clothes, or in his military undress; and here his favourite garment is the red English coat, from which, even in sleep, he will not part. He throws it on over his shirt, whilst he sets on his head the picturesque Indo-Afghán turban. Others again, and these are the *beau monde*, are wont to assume a half-Persian costume. Weapons are borne by all. Rarely does any one, whether civil

* When Herát had been captured by the Amír Dost Muhammad.

or military, enter the bazaar without his sword and shield. To be quite *à la mode*, one must carry about quite an arsenal, consisting of two pistols, a sword, poignard, handjar, gun, and shield. With the wild martial-looking Afghán we can only compare the Turkmán-like Jamshídí. The wretchedly dressed Heráti, the naked Hazári, the Taimúri of the vicinity, are overlooked when the Afghán is present. He encounters around nothing but abject humility; but never was a ruler or conqueror so detested as is the Afghán by the Heráti. The bazaar itself, dating from Herát's epoch of splendour, the reign of the Sultán Husén Mirza, and consequently about four hundred years old, deserved still, even in its ruins, the epithet beautiful." The description continues, but for more of it I must refer the reader to the fascinating volume.

Of the interior of the city it is unnecessary to say more. What it has been I have already recorded. What it may become under good government must be clear to all who have followed me so far. Every European who has seen Herát and its magnificent valley has borne witness to its splendid capabilities. To the testimony of Forster, Fraser,

Christie, Conolly, Gerrard, Mohun Lal, Ferrier, and Vambéry, may now be added the latest of all—that of Captain Marsh. “Herát,” wrote that officer in 1873, “is situated in a broad valley, four miles from the hills to the north, and about twelve to the hills south of it. The large valley is watered by canals from the Herírúd, which is dammed up by a *bund* thrown across it, a few miles above the city. One of the many watercourses enters the city, others water the whole plain, which, if the country were quiet, would be one large sheet of cultivation. As the land is fertile and the climate good, a few years would turn all this desert into a garden!” *

One word about the revenue. On this point it is impossible to give an accurate estimate. The one fact that many of the richest districts are held by chiefs on condition of military service, and the other, that since 1750—the year of the inauguration of the Afghán rule—there has been protection of life and property neither for the agriculturist nor

* I must refer the reader who desires a more particular account of Herát and of what it suffered from its several sieges, to Ferrier’s “Caravan Journeys.”

the trader, prevent the possibility of making a reliable calculation. In a word, the Afgháns have squeezed the land till the cultivators have been ruined. All writers, however, agree in stating that were the country settled and equitably governed, there would be no bounds to its produce. Judging from this evidence, and calculating on the estimate furnished by Conolly, it is not too much to affirm that a few years of English administration would suffice to place Herát and its districts in the position with respect to Afghánistán which the province of Bengal occupies with respect to Northern India. That is, Herát would pay all the expenses of the occupation of Afghánistán and still yield something more to the treasury. But this is the least of the benefits its occupation would accomplish. The indirect wealth which would accrue to England by the possession of the key to the markets of Central Asia is not to be calculated.

But it is not to the cupidity of the British manufacturer that I would appeal. There is something more important even than the commercial interests of a country. These people in their agony implore the protection of England. More than forty years

ago the Herátís besought the British Resident, Major D'Arcy Tod, to obtain for their city the protection of England. Forty years ago England rejected the offer thus made to her. What have been the consequences? Read them in the pages of the patriotic Hungarian who visited Herát nearly thirty years after that refusal. "The city," wrote Arminius Vambéry in 1864, "had a most gloomy, troubled aspect; the dread of their savage conqueror" (the Afghán) "was painted on the features of its inhabitants. The incidents of the last siege, its capture and plundering, formed the constant subject of conversation." Then follows the account of the barbarities perpetrated by the conqueror. Vambéry thus continues: "Whoever is acquainted with the covetousness of the filthy grasping Afghán may picture to himself how he would behave in plundering a city. The besiegers levied contributions upon the city during a day, upon the country around during months. . . . It is a pity that, instead of seeking to heal the wounds which they" (the Afgháns) "have inflicted, their miserable policy seems now to aim at reducing the whole province still further to beggary; so that in a country, where undoubtedly they are

called upon to play an important part, they have rendered themselves objects of detestation ; for the inhabitants would at once again plunge into a hopeless contest rather than ever again acknowledge the supremacy of the Afgháns." Again : "As it is," continues M. Vambéry, "fear alone keeps things together. It needs only some attack, no matter by whom to be made upon Herát, for the Heráti to be the first to take up arms against the Afgháns. Nor does this observation apply to the Shiite inhabitants alone, whose sympathies are, of course, in favour of Persia, but even to those of the Sunnite persuasion, who would certainly prefer the Kizzilbásh to their present oppressors ; but I find no exaggeration in the opinion that they long most for the intervention of the English, whose feelings of humanity and justice have led the inhabitants to forget the great differences in religion and nationality. The Heráti saw, during the government of Major Todd, more earnestness and self-sacrifice with respect to the ransoming of slaves than they had ever even heard of before on the part of a ruler. Their native governments had habituated them to be plundered and murdered, not spared or rewarded."

It is impossible to gainsay this opinion, shared in, as it is, by every Englishman who has travelled in Khorásán. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that in that province, and in its capital, Herát, the Afgháns are greater foreigners than would be the Anglo-Indian administrators and soldiers. Not only has the Afghán nothing in common with the Heráti, but he is absolutely alien in blood. Now there is a connection in blood between the Heráti and the Muhammadan of Northern India. The men who followed Bábar and Humáyun had in their veins the same strain of Turkí blood which circulates in the Heráti. Their descendants and the Khorásánis generally trace on one side a common ancestry. Nor is the affinity confined to blood alone. Whilst the Afghán is a plunderer and murderer by profession, detesting labour, given to the worst kinds of debauchery, the northern Indian and the Heráti are industrious, enterprising, inventive, and lovers of art. To allow such men to be governed by brutal tyrants who crush their industries and strangle their commerce, is a sin alike against humanity and civilisation. The occupation of Herát by England would not only revive the commercial system which, three centuries ago, made

of that city and its environs the granary and the garden of Central Asia—it would free from the withering grasp of an inferior race the descendants of the men who cherished learning, art, and science in Khorásán at a time when even Europe was but just emerging from the comparative barbarism of the middle ages.

Since Vambéry wrote political matters have advanced. The Herátís have now, of their own accord, taken up arms against the Afghán oppressor. They see that England is at last in earnest. They have shown that they deserve to be free by themselves striking the blow. But their city still suffers in the hands of their enemy. With arms to combat that enemy in their hands, they still turn with longing eyes and earnest prayers to England. Surely England will not be deaf to the appeal!

CHAPTER V.



KANDAHAR TO HERAT.

IN this and the following chapters I propose to give, in such detail as I have been able to collect from the reports of those who have traversed the country, an account of the roads connecting Herát with Kandahár to the south; with Mashad to the west; with Sarrahs, Merv, and Charjúi to the north; with Mamainé, Andkho, Shiborgan, Takhtapul (near Balkh), Khúlm, and Faizábád to the north-east. I shall then connect Khúlm with Kábul, and the latter with Herát. The present chapter will be devoted to the road between Kandahár and Herát.

There are three important posts on the principal road between Kandahár and Herát—Sabzwár, Farrah,

and Girishk. The distance by this road is three hundred and sixty-nine miles.

From Kandahár to Girishk the distance barely exceeds seventy-five miles.

The first march is to Kokáran—seven miles. The first three miles of road pass through the enclosed gardens and suburbs of the city. The road crosses the several canals drawn from the Argandáb for irrigating the Kandahár valley. At Kokáran water is abundant, the encamping-ground is well adapted for a large force, and forage can be supplied in sufficient quantities.

To Sanjarí—five miles. The bed of the Argandáb is crossed. The river, in the month of June, averages about two feet and a quarter in depth, and the passage of it is easy. There is a ford about three-quarters of a mile lower down by which it would be advisable to cross heavy guns. Beyond the river one or two artificial watercourses have to be crossed. The road is stony in some places, but generally good. There is excellent encamping-ground at Sanjarí ; water is plentiful, and forage is sufficient.

To Hauz-i-Maddad Khán—fourteen miles. An excellent road across a broad, hard, level plain. A

canal runs parallel to the road the whole of the march. The ground for encampment is good ; water is plentiful near the camp ; forage for camels is abundant ; grass is scarce near the camp, but plentiful a few miles to the south of it. There are several villages in the neighbourhood ; as well as flocks of sheep and goats.

Khúsk-i-Nakhúd—fifteen miles and three-quarters. A hard, level, gravel road without obstacle or difficulty. At Khúshk-i-Nakhúd water is plentiful, from two artificial watercourses ; the encamping-ground is good ; fodder for camels is plentiful ; but grass, in the immediate vicinity of the camp, is scarce.

To Khak-i-Chapan—nine miles and three-quarters. The road generally good and level, though here and there the sand lies deep. The encamping-ground, though somewhat irregular, could easily be occupied by a large force. There is a sufficient, though not over-abundant supply of water. Forage of all sorts is less plentiful. There are, however, villages and cultivation two or three miles south of the encamping-ground, as well as large flocks of sheep.

To Girishk—not quite twenty-four miles. The road to the left bank of the Helmand, about twenty-two

miles and a half, is generally good and hard, the first part slightly undulating, with one or two sandy patches. There is a well about midway, but the water procurable from it is insufficient for more than a few travellers. On the left bank of the river is an excellent encamping-ground, with abundance of water and an ample supply of forage of all sorts. The Helmand is a difficult river to cross. In June its depth is about three feet nine inches; its width in the widest branch is seventy yards. The current runs at the rate of three miles an hour. There is a ferry which it is sometimes necessary to use. At Girishk the encamping-ground is sufficient, though here and there broken. Water and supplies of all sorts are abundant.

What Girishk once was may be gathered from the traditions of the time of Zamán Sháh. Even then people used to say that "the Helmand flowed through a garden." Now, though arable land abounds, there is but little cultivation. In fact, with the exception of the land immediately on the bank of the river, there is none. Afghán oppression has made itself felt even here!

The fort, though much dilapidated, commands a

good view of the surrounding country. It is not, however, capable of defence against artillery.

From Girishk to Farrah the distance, by the route adopted by Ferrier and Marsh, is a hundred and twenty miles. There is a route by Shoráb and Hásán Gilan, shorter by twenty miles, but of this I have been unable to find any accurate record.

Girishk to Zirak—twenty miles. The first six miles stony and undulating, the beds of several torrents crossing the line. The road then becomes level and easy till the fort of Saadat, eighteen miles from Girishk, is reached. Saadat, once a rather strong, but, when Captain Marsh saw it in 1873, a deserted and ruined hill fort, has a plentiful supply of water. The road then becomes again undulating and continues so until close to Zirak. Zirak is a small village situated at the foot of the mountains on the right of the road to Herát and opposite Mahmudábád, described by Captain Marsh as a small village in a hollow watered by an artificial watercourse. At Zirak water is good and abundant, and forage for camels and horses is plentiful.

To Dúshákh—twelve miles and a half. The road hard and level. Water at the village of Súr, about

half way. The encamping-ground at Dúshákh is good, and forage for camels and horses is abundant.

To Biabának—three miles and a half. Road level, across a tolerably hard plain. There is an artificial canal at Biabának providing plenty of water. Grass and fodder are abundant.

To Wáshir—twenty-four miles. About four miles from Biabának the road enters a range of hills with a gradual ascent to nine hundred feet, presenting no great difficulties. From this point to Wáshir the road winds among declivities, and follows the bed of watercourses, passing over much difficult ground. For the last nine miles the road runs down a valley, with a gentle slope. It is hard and good till within two miles of Wáshir, when it becomes undulating and stony. Many villages and gardens, watered by artificial canals, are passed in this descent. Ferrier made the journey by halting during the heat of the day at Biabának and then pushing on across the range, twenty miles, to Painak, but with no advantage over the route here laid down. At Wáshir supplies of all sorts, including water, are abundant.

To the Káshrúd river—fourteen miles. The road stony and uneven, the last four miles being along a

dry watercourse. The descent into the bed of the Káshrúd steep and bad. It is, however, practicable for artillery. The river supplies excellent water. Forage for camels abounds, but grass is less plentiful.

To Háji Ibráhímí—fourteen miles. The fording of the Káshrúd is at certain seasons impossible, in consequence of the impetuosity of the torrent. In the hot season, however, the depth of the water does not exceed eighteen inches. After crossing the river the road pursues a tortuous course among hills for about three miles; it then crosses a dreary steppe till it reaches Háji Ibráhímí. Ferrier states that between Háji Ibráhímí and Káshrúd there is not a drop of water. Water and forage are both procurable at the former place.

Háji Ibráhímí to Siah-áb—Ferrier calls this place Shiaguz—distance ten miles. Siah-áb is the point whence a direct road, avoiding alike Farrah and Sabzawár, runs *viá* Giráneh to Herát. It is an encamping-ground where water and forage are alike available.

Siah-áb to Kharmálik—twenty-two miles. The first and last part of this stage leads the traveller through plains, fields, and marshes. The inter-

mediate part is intersected by stony mountains, steeply scarp'd at the sides. Kharmálik, writes Captain Marsh, "is situated in a small grassy hollow. A few date-palms and cattle, in the immediate neighbourhood of a few mean huts and wall-surrounded tower, are all it possesses." Water and forage are procurable here.

Kharmálik to Farrah—twenty miles. The road leads across a desolate plain; then, over a low pass, enters a stony valley. Numerous ruins near the road indicate that the district was once well populated. The plain is totally devoid of drinking-water.

"The appearance of Farrah a short way off," writes Captain Marsh, "is imposing. Its high embattled and bastioned walls, its broad, well-kept ditch, and fine large gate and drawbridge give it the air of wealth and ease. But what a delusion is this! On entering the city I was surprised to see its fallen state. The size of the interior is, perhaps, the third of Herát; but it does possess twenty huts, and those all in ruins. Where is the city of Farrah? Nowhere."

Farrah owes its destruction to the Persians and the Afgháns. In 1837 the Persians besieged and laid it

waste because it belonged to Afghánistán. In 1852 the Barakzye Afgháns completed its destruction because it was dependent upon the Saduzye Afghán rulers of Herát. What Farrah was before the first of these events Conolly bore testimony in 1832. After speaking of it as a town possessing two thousand houses, he adds: "The land is fertile and much grain is cultivated, as the shepherds for many miles are supplied with it from hence. . . . The Furráh-rúd" (river of Furráh) "is in spring a wide and deep river, and there is always sufficient water for much cultivation." Ten years previously Mr. Fraser had described it as "a city as large as Nishápúr, situated in a valley among hills with about twenty villages and many gardens."

I have stated that from Siah-áb runs the direct road to Herát *viâ* Giráneh, avoiding Farrah and Sabzwár. It is worthy of consideration whether this route might not be ultimately made the main line of communication. It is shorter; and a force stationed at Giráneh would command alike Farrah and Sabzwár. Ferrier, after alluding to the strength of the fort as it was five-and-thirty years ago, thus writes regarding the position. "The position is important. It com-

mands the passage of the river and the defiles in the mountains of the south. A small force quartered there might maintain its authority in the districts of Sabzwár, Farrah, Laush, Bakwá, Gulistán, Gour, and Sakkar, Giráneh being the central point round which converge these localities—information,” he emphatically adds, “for the English and the Russians!” May the English first profit by the hint!

I may add that the road from Giráneh to Herát runs by Ab-i-Kúrmah and Sháh Jahán, and joins the Sabzwár road at Kásh Jabrán, a few miles above Sabzwár itself. The distances may be thus computed from Ferrier’s journal. From Kásh Jabrán to Sháh Jahán about nine hours caravan journey, or about twenty miles; from Sháh Jahán to Giráneh fifty-six miles. The country during the greater part of the way is described by Ferrier as well wooded and abounding in game, notwithstanding an almost entire deficiency of water.

I return now to the route by Farrah and Sabzwár. The distance between those two places is eighty miles. “There are,” writes Captain Marsh, “no villages—a vast jumble of valleys and hills, with small plains, inhabited only by a nomadic people. Each place has

its name, but if the traveller finds tents at the same place twice he is lucky." Captain Marsh accomplished the journey in three days, by Khúsh, Kilamúsha, and Darwázai. At each of these places he found water. Indeed, after the first twenty-five miles, the traveller follows, with a few deviations, the valley of the Rúd-i-Adrashkán. Regarding this river Ferrier observes that an army marching from Herát in the summer months should follow its course, as the commander would then be free from anxiety regarding the supply of water for his men and cattle.* The hint should not be forgotten by an army which should march to Herát.

Sabzwár is eighty miles from Herát. It lies at the extremity of a large oblong plain, ten or twelve miles in circumference. The fort, prettily situated, is not formidable. The country around it is well cultivated, and abounds in flocks and herds. Water and

* The Rúd-i-Adrashkán takes its rise near Oneh, to the east of Herát, and debouches in the plains of the Adrashkán district—whence its first name. It subsequently assumes the names of the districts through which it flows until it takes finally the name—which in ancient times it bore throughout its course—of Harut-rúd, and loses itself in the Sistán lake.

supplies are abundant. A Hindú, who visited it in 1823, compared it for fertility with the best parts of Hindústán.

The road between Sabzwár and Herát needs no special description. It is good and level and passable for wheeled carriages of all descriptions. Supplies of all kinds are abundant.

The following are the stages—easily, if considered advisable, to be divided :—

Sabzwár to Kásh Jabrái. -twenty-one miles. Midway is a water reservoir, now in ruins. At Kásh Jabrán the direct road to Kandahár branches off, taking the route by Giráneah.

To Adrashkán—eleven miles, about a mile on the Sabzwár side of the river of the same name.

To Sháh Beg or Bád—twenty-three miles. Five miles after crossing the Rúd-i-Adrashkán the traveller reaches the Rúd-i-Gaz, a rapid stream, fifteen or twenty yards broad, whose waters flow into the Adrashkán a little to the west of the village of that name. Six miles further the ruined caravansarai of Mír Allah is reached. It is surrounded by cultivation, and a fine stream of water runs under its walls. Six and a half miles further, again, the traveller passes a

spring of sweet water on the left of the road. The dwarf reed, which provides sufficient fodder for horses, is here abundant; but the food of man has to be carried. Water is plentiful at Sháh Beg.

To Mir Dáúd—twelve miles. The traveller descends from Sháh Beg. The descent is regular and gradual. The country is now uninhabited and uncultivated. Red and grey partridges abound. There is an artificial arrangement for the supply of water at Mir Dáúd, but under Afghán rule it has been but little cared for.

To Herát—eighteen miles. A good view of the city is obtainable from the last-named station. The traveller proceeds by a good road, ten miles, to Rozeh Bágh, a royal garden—in olden days planted with Scotch firs of great size and beauty. Little more than four miles further on, the Herírúd is reached. The breadth of the river at this point is about one hundred and fifty yards. Its bed is here hollowed out, and its waters run in fifteen separate channels, twelve feet wide and very deep, enclosed between two embankments formed of the earth taken out for the excavations. To the south of the river is a fine piece of pasture-land formerly thickly studded with gardens

and villages. The ruins of houses, aqueducts, and other industrial monuments between this point and the city give the traveller an idea of what Herát used to be in her palmy days—of what she may yet once more become should England accept the offer which the Herátís earnestly press upon her.

CHAPTER VI.

MASHAD TO HERAT.

I PROCEED now to examine the routes and the nature of the country between Mashad and Herát. The information given by Mr. Fraser on this subject in the appendix to his valuable work has been practically superseded by the experience of later travellers. Of these I select as my guides Captain Marsh and Colonel MacGregor, who traversed the country, severally, in 1872 and 1875. The routes adopted were not altogether the same, but the points of divergence will be indicated. The distance by Captain Marsh's route may be calculated at about two hundred and twenty-four miles.

The first march from Mashad takes the traveller to Sangbast—a distance of about twenty-four miles.

Sangbast is described by Captain Marsh as an old village and caravansarai, walled, formerly occupied by a colony of Afgháns, but now in ruins. Colonel MacGregor,* who travelled in the opposite direction—from the vicinity of Herát to Mashad—thus describes the country between that place and Sangbast. “Next day I marched into Mashad over the same sort of country” (low, undulating hills) “as far as Torokh, a village of five hundred houses, walled, and with a great deal of cultivation, protected by numerous Turkmán towers. The range to the right of the road, which is called Koh-i-Sar-i-Jám, ends quite abruptly; there is a break of some distance before the Mihráb range commences. There is no doubt, however, that the latter is a continuation of the former, as between Sharífábád and Nishápúr is a low ridge, which drains on one side to the Ali-i-Mashad, and on the other to the Nishápúr valley; and the Mihráb range takes this main range on to the hills of the Atrák.”† Colonel MacGregor gives a

* “Journey through Khorásán in 1874,” by Colonel C. M. MacGregor, C.S.I., C.B. London: Allen and Co. 1879.

† The word Atrák is the plural form of the word “Turk”: the river Atrák is, thus, “the river of the Turkmans.”

far more glowing description of Sangbast than does Captain Marsh. It is the first and only village he had seen in Persia which was regularly laid out. The supply of water to it is plentiful, and is capable of being largely increased.

The second march leads to the village of Farimún, about twenty-two miles. Colonel MacGregor thus describes the route, starting, be it remembered, from Farimún.

“The road from Farimún to Sangbast with the exception of a couple of miles at the beginning” (beginning from Farimún), “is all over a waste of low, undulating hills which bound the valley of Jám to the west, and are the link connecting the Jám range with that of the Koh Gaghar range on the north.” “The tract,” he adds, “is considered very dangerous, as the Turkmáns are enabled to come in through the Koh-i-Chihl Sang range (which runs parallel with that of the Goghar, and is everywhere practicable) from the direction of Sarrahks. The Persians have got a line of look-out towers placed on commanding sites all along the north flank of this road, and these would no doubt prove useful under efficient arrangements, but they are, as a rule, left without any

look-out men, very much like a light-house without a light. About half way we passed a ruined village called Faizábád, which, four years ago, the Turkmáns had surprised when most of the men were out, and had carried off every soul—about one hundred—out of it.”

From this point to Kahríz the roads of the two travellers diverged, Captain Marsh taking the more northern route by Abdúlábád, Colonel MacGregor the more southern by Shahr-i-nao. I shall first follow Captain Marsh.

That officer's third march took him to Bardú, an insignificant place about five miles short of Abdúlábád—the distance from Farimún about twenty miles. The road he describes as bad and stony, with small hills on both sides, behind which it is easy for the Turkmáns to lie in ambush. Eight miles from Farimún he passed through the village of Kallandarábád, which had then but recently been plundered.

Captain Marsh's fourth march was to Mahmúdábád, a distance of twenty-six miles. He speaks in high terms of the cultivation he met with on the way. “Here,” he writes, “I saw rich green fields, crops of barley and wheat, just cut, also lucern grass

for winter fodder." He adds that the soil is extremely fertile, "producing wheat once and barley twice a year."

In his fifth march Captain Marsh reached Túrbat-i-Jámí, about eighteen miles. He speaks of the country as becoming more open, and of the population as becoming less Persian and more Afghán in dress and appearance. Five miles from this place, at the town of Jám, was fought, in 1528, the decisive battle between Sháh Tahmasp and the Uzbeks.*

Captain Marsh's sixth march was to Kahríz—thirty-two miles. He describes the country as "nearly flat; though the soil is good it is a wilderness, thirty-six miles without a tree or a habitation." Kahríz is a small fortified village near the Persian frontier.

Having brought Captain Marsh to Kahríz by the upper, I must conduct Colonel MacGregor thither by the lower, road. I left him, it will be recollected, at Farimún.

Colonel MacGregor's third march was Himmat-ábád (distance not recorded, but probably twenty-

* *Vide* page 71.

eight miles). It was when making this journey—in the reverse direction—that the Colonel was attacked by Turkmáns. Of the country he formed a very high opinion. “There is abundance of water,” he writes, “and as the soil is good there is no reason why these hills should not support a considerable population if there were any. The climate, too, on this range is quite lovely; the sun, though hot, is not too powerful to prevent a man remaining out in it, and working all but, say, four hours in the middle of the day. For this reason I am of opinion that Europeans could easily colonise this and similar parts of Persia.”

Colonel MacGregor's fourth march was to Shahr-i-nao, twelve miles. His account of the tract he traversed is not less favourable than the preceding. He speaks of the road as leading “now through cultivation, now through the most splendid pasture-land I have seen in Persia.” Shahr-i-nao he describes as “having a great deal of cultivation and very numerous gardens for so small a population, and, as there is plenty of good water, cultivation might be increased to any extent almost.”

The next halting-place on the Colonel's route

was Mashaddi Réza, two villages not far from the Khauf range,—distance not recorded, but about twenty-two miles. The road from these villages to Shahr-i-nao ascends “imperceptibly to a low ridge, which runs out from the Khauf range, and divides the drainage of Kahríz from that of Mohsin-ábád. This is crossed just before getting to Shahr-i-nao, which is in a little basin.” Of the two villages he records that they are about a mile apart, but connected by cultivation, of which, as well as of water—which comes from Kahríz—there is abundance.”

The sixth march connected these two villages with Kahríz, about twenty-four miles, “a small place,” writes MacGregor, “of about one hundred houses, most of which are inside the fort, though there are some outside near a serai. The fort is a strong place, and might make a decent resistance. The village is celebrated for its melons, but in order that the community may not enjoy too much bliss, it is also known as about the most exposed place on the frontier.”

At Kahríz the roads taken by the two travellers joined. The next march was to Kohsan, the frontier fort of the province of Herát, distance twenty-eight

miles. Kohsán is now in ruins, but in Colonel MacGregor's opinion it could easily be improved "so as to make it worthy of the frontier post of a warlike nation." Of the results of the fertility of its soil, the same author writes with enthusiasm. "Conducted into a most delightful garden, I bivouacked under the shade of some fine plane trees, by a tank of delicious clear water. After a good bath in the latter, it was a great luxury to lie back on one's bed, and devour, for nothing, bunch after bunch of glorious grapes, that at home would have ruined me." MacGregor makes special mention likewise of the fine gardens and vineyards, and of the numerous windmills near Kohsán. To reach this place the Herírúd has to be crossed about two miles from it, and the traveller finds himself, at last, in the glorious Herát valley.

From Kohsán Captain Marsh proceeded to Herát in three stages. The first—a short one of about twelve miles—to Sabash, "a little, mean, dirty fort, barely habitable"; the second to Shakhwán—about thirty-two miles. Captain Marsh thus describes the road :—"The road goes along the high grounds at some distance from the river; gravel soil and a vast plain with

distant hills on both sides. We passed the fort of Rozanák, and saw Ghorían in the distance, a large village, about a farsak " (four miles) " off, on the left bank of the river ; the revenue of this village is six thousand tomauns,* and it supports four hundred sowars as militia, who hold 'free' lands or *Teool*, on condition of military service. At Rozanák we stopped to see some curiously-made windmills, erected on one of the bastions of the village. The windy season, they say, blows from the north, and comes regularly ; so windmills are more common here than watermills. They worked horizontally, and had six arms, on which were hung mats as sails. . . . An old Sháh Abbás's caravanserai in ruins was passed, then over a bad water-covered road, being a network of canals from the river to Shakhwán, a large group of three villages and forts."

The next day Captain Marsh rode into Herát. The distance by direct road is twenty-four miles, but

* This must refer to the village alone ; for Fraser writes : "The town and district of Ghorían yield fifty thousand tomauns to the Government of Herát." A Herátí tomaun is worth twenty rupees.

to avoid the wet cultivation near the river, Captain Marsh made a detour of eight miles, crossing the Júlgha or plain of Herát, "a sandy loam which bears good crops by irrigation."

I return now to Colonel MacGregor. From Kohsán the route of that officer lay to Ghorian; from Ghoríán, through Zandehgán to Deh-i-Minár; and from the latter place to Kargan, five miles from Herát. A better division of this route would be Ghoríán, Zandehgán, and Herát itself. Colonel MacGregor gives in his interesting work a graphic description of the personal difficulties which beset him in his march from Kargan to Kohsán, and of the soldierly manner in which he overcame them. With the country he was favourably impressed. "This glorious valley," said he to himself, "is it to be English or Russian?"

CHAPTER VII.

HERAT TO SARRAKHS, MERV, AND CHARJUI.

I now proceed to detail the information I have been able to collect regarding the route from Herát to Merv, *viâ* Sarrakhs; then the alternative route by the Murgháb valley; and lastly, the route from Merv to Charjúi, the ferry on the Oxus.

The caravan route from Herát to Merv takes the traveller along the Mashad road traversed by Captain Marsh as far as Kohsán—sixty-eight miles.*

From Kohsán to Sarrakhs the distance is eighty-four miles. For the description of the road I am

* *Vide* page 128.

indebted to Colonel MacGregor.* Kohsán to Chasma Saoz—twenty-four miles. The road, which is good, traverses a plain on the left bank of the Herírúd. Supplies of all sorts are here abundant. Chasma Saoz to Pul-i-Khátan —twenty-eight miles. The road crosses the Kotal Istakhanchil pass and then traverses hills, crossing to the right bank not far from Pul-i-Khátan. Though not good, it is practicable for guns. There is no village, but forage is abundant. Not far from this the Herírúd separates into two branches, the northernmost of which takes the name of Tajand.

Pul-i-Khátan to Sarraḡhs—thirty-two miles. Road level. At eight miles the village of Naozábád is reached; sixteen miles further Kálá Daolatábád. The road proceeds to Sarraḡhs along the left bank of the Tajand river.

Sarraḡhs is described by Colonel MacGregor. The soil he speaks of as being of a light sandy nature, but as there is abundance of water at a depth of

* "Journey through Khorassan," Appendix, vol. ii. The distances in this and other works are reckoned in farsangs or farsaks—i.e. parasangs. A parasang is generally something short of four English miles; but I have followed Fraser in reckoning it as the exact equivalent of that distance.

about twenty feet, it would, he thinks, be capable of producing large crops. The place he pronounces to be admirably situated for drawing to it all the trade between Turkistán on the north and Khorásán on the south. "It has," he adds, "every advantage of soil and water and climate that would be necessary for these purposes."

Regarding its military position, the words of Colonel MacGregor, himself one of the most able and distinguished officers on the general staff of the army in India, are full of warning. 'There is no uncertainty in the sound they breathe. "With regard to its strategical importance," he writes regarding Sarrahs, "I think a glance at the map will show that in the complications which must arise ere the Russo-Indian question can be deemed settled, its future is likely to be a stirring one. Placed at the junction of roads from Herát and Mashad, by the Herírúd and the Áb-i-Mashad valleys respectively, and at the best entrance to the province of Khorásán from the north, it cannot fail to exercise a very serious influence on the momentous issue of the above question. This must happen, whether it fall into the hands of the friends of England or into those of her foes.

Whether Russia use Sarrakhs as a base for offensive measures against Herát, or England use her as a defensive outpost to defeat any such operations, that position will be heard of again. And if my feeble voice can effect a warning ere it is too late, let it here be raised in these words: *If England does not use Sarrakhs for defence, Russia will use it for offence.*" *

Let the reader bear in mind that Sarrakhs is distant from Herát one hundred and fifty-two miles; from Merv, certainly more than fifty, probably but little short of seventy.

Colonel MacGregor crossed the Tajand, rode some twelve miles from Sarrakhs in the direction of Merv, to the edge of the desert. He was not allowed to proceed further. That desert was traversed by Sir Alexander Burnes (then Lieutenant Burnes, F.R.S.) with a caravan in 1832. The caravan (of laden camels) passed within sight of the ruined castle of Merv (which Burnes did not examine) on the afternoon of the 29th August, and reached Sarrakhs at sunrise on the 22nd September. This would make it a journey of between seventy and eighty hours. But the caravan

* The italics are Colonel MacGregor's.

changed its route on the way, and only began the direct track on the 31st. Coming from Charjúi, the caravan had reached and encamped upon the banks of the Murgháb on the 28th August. On the 29th it marched twelve miles down the river, and crossed to the left bank at Ulíshá. The travellers then passed close by Merv and took the direct road, by way of Arták, to Mashad. In consequence, however, of an intended Turkmán foray, the chiefs of the caravan resolved to alter the route to Sarrakhs. The caravan accordingly retraced its steps to Kanjú Kúlan, a few miles to the north of Merv, on the direct road to Sarrakhs. From this place, on the left bank of the Murgháb, the route lay thirty-seven miles across the desert to Kalúrní. This route Burnes thus describes :
“The tract was entirely different from the opposite side” (of the Murgháb) “and about the middle of the journey the desert changed into a level, hard, flat surface, which it ever afterwards preserved. . . .
The country was destitute of water, but there are many remains of caravansarais and cisterns that had been built by the philanthropic Abdúlla Khán of Bokhára.”

Kalúrní is a ruin. The distance thence to Sarrakhs

is thirty-three miles, of which about twenty are desert of the same character as that already described. The last twelve or thirteen miles bear a different character. "As we approached Sarrakhs," writes Burnes, "we could distinguish a gradual, though almost imperceptible rise in the country. We exchanged the shrubs that I have before described for the tamarisk and the camel's thorn, which does not grow in the desert."

I regret I am unable to discover an account more in detail of the road between Sarrakhs and Merv. That which I have given, however, shows clearly enough, that the desert between the two places offers no invincible obstacle to the march of a well-organized army, or, indeed, to any army led by a competent and active general. The distance by this route I have calculated to be two hundred and twenty-two miles, but the calculation is probably slightly in excess of the actual figure. At all events the distance has not been overstated.

Before proceeding from Merv to Chárjúi it is necessary that the alternative route from Herát to the former, along the valley of the Múrgháb, should be indicated. This route was traversed by Captain

James Abbot in 1840, and by the late Sir Richmond Shakespear in the following year.

The first march by this route leads to Parwána—eleven miles. The road lies between close hills, of no considerable height, and ascends the entire distance to Parwána. Around this village are hills and high plains producing wormwood, which is browsed by the wild antelope. There are many wells and a little cultivation.

From Parwána Captain Abbot, whose journal I am following,* proceeded across the mountain ridge of Kaitú to Kúshk, somewhat off the direct road. Captain Abbot writes :—" Avoiding now the more direct and difficult passes of the mountain ridge of Kaitú, we crossed that chain without accident, meeting neither dwelling nor tent, excepting two ruined hospitia in the valley, and, descending some grassy heights, pitched at evening in a hollow, where we found a little water. . . . One flock of sheep in the distance, and the wild antelopes of the wilderness, were the sole living things we saw."

* "Narrative of a Journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow, and St. Petersburg," by Captain James Abbot. Calcutta: 1841.

From this hollow Captain Abbot proceeded the next day by “a very distressing cross-country path, over steep hills covered with grass, to the rivulet Kúshk, which we ascended to the capital of that name. The valley here is picturesque and interesting.” Of the inhabitants—Jamshídís of Turkish descent—Captain Abbot writes as follows:—“They are short, stout, very dark, with decidedly Tartar features. Wherever water and soil are found a little cultivation is maintained by them, but their wealth consists in flocks of sheep and herds of horses of Turkman breed.”

From Kúshk Captain Abbot marched down the valley of the rivulet of the same name in the direction of Chaman-i-Baid. He encamped in the evening at a point on the river, evidently between Kúshat Siah and Kála Tapah. He thus describes the country:—“We passed down the valley of the Kúshk rivulet, averaging about half a mile in width, and bounded on either side by sloping, grassy downs, sprinkled with flocks of sheep and goats. Under the low sunny cliffs and hills the Jamshídís had pitched their black tents in considerable numbers; and in the fields of the valley hundreds of mares and colts were grazing. The scene was extremely pleasing. The

valley is highly susceptible of culture, and has once been well tilled."

In the next march, similar scenery and similar cultivation as far as Kála Tapah. Beyond Kála Tapah "there are few black tents; but large flocks of sheep are still met with. The shepherds come even from Merv to this pleasant valley, bringing water and all other necessaries on asses." The march, which continued all day, concluded within two miles short of Chaman-i-Baid.

The day following presented scenes almost similar. "Large flocks of white sheep still sprinkled the hills on either side, but those hills were growing more arid and sandy as we advanced." The march concluded at Kála-i-Maur. On the way "we met not less than six or seven caravans of grain from Merv." At this place the traveller enters the kingdom of Khwárizm.

From Kála-i-Maur Captain Abbot marched from the valley of the Kúshk into that of the Murgháb, "passing the ruined vineyards and deserted fields of a once populous and cultivated district." The Murgháb and the valley traversed by it he thus describes: "The Murgháb is here a deep stream of very pure water, about sixty feet in breadth, and flowing in a

channel mined to the depth of thirty feet in the clay soil of the valley. The banks are very precipitous, and fringed with tamarisk and a few reeds. The valley itself is, at Panjdeh,* about nine miles in breadth, but narrows as we advance. Here"—at Pul-i-Kishti, where the Kúshk joins it—"it is about three-quarters of a mile in breadth. On the east bank are sloping sand-hills, about six hundred feet higher than the valley. On the west is the desert, a high, sandy plain over-run with low bushes and camel-thorn, and extending to the mountain barrier of Persia. The valley of the Murgháb has once been well cultivated, but is now, from Panjdeh to Yúlatán,† utterly deserted, owing to the late distractions of the country."

On the fourth day after leaving Kála-i-Maur Captain Abbot reached Yúlatán, still following the Murgháb through a country similar to that already described. There would appear, however, to be considerable traffic on the road. "We met a caravan every third mile," writes Captain Abbot, "laden

* Between Meruchak and A'k Tapah.

† Not marked in the map; but probably not far from Kazaldí.

with wheat and barley from Merv." As he approached Yúlatán he found the desert aspect of the country a little broken by symptoms of recent cultivation.

From this place Captain Abbot reached Merv in one march.

Captain Abbot's description of Merv will go far to show that it is a place which no nation would care to conquer for its own intrinsic value; that its possession is desirable as a stepping-stone to further advance, but for no other reason. "Merv," writes Captain Abbot, "was one of the most ancient cities of Asia. It was situated in the plain, about twelve miles east of the little bazaar which at present bears its name, and was watered by a canal from the Murgháb or Áb-i-Maur. . . . During the misrule and anarchy of the last sixty years the ancient dam of the Murgháb was neglected and carried away. The city in consequence became uninhabitable, and was utterly abandoned. The dam is again set up, and the lands are brought under culture, but the ancient site continues a deserted ruin. The present Merv is an assemblage, on the Murgháb, of about one hundred mud huts, where a considerable bazaar is

held. The entire waters of the Murgháb are dispersed over the sandy plain for the purposes of irrigation. This profusion of water renders the soil productive; but it has not the strength to bear any but the poorer kinds of grain. The plain is perhaps an area of sixty miles by forty, or two thousand four hundred square miles, running on every side into the desert." A little further on he adds: "I was glad to quit this wretched though much-vaunted plain and enter the desert, which is a paradise in comparison."

I have now given the two routes between Herát and Merv, the first being the caravan route *via* Sarrahks; the second the valley of the Murgháb, also for a considerable portion of the way a caravan route. The first, presenting no difficulties not easily to be surmounted to an army, covers, as already stated, a distance certainly not exceeding, and probably somewhat short of, two hundred and twenty-two miles. The distance of the second is not so easily calculated. Captain Abbot, making a divergence of two days from the direct route in order to visit Kushk, accomplished the journey in thirteen days. Deducting the two days, the distance, granting an average rate of travel

of twenty-two miles, may be surmised to be at the utmost two hundred and forty miles. This agrees with the Heráti estimate of the distance.

From Merv to Chárjúi the distance is one hundred and forty-two miles. As there is no prospect that the English would march upon Charjúi, whilst a Russian general has declared that, starting from that place, he would engage to reach Merv in five days, it will be convenient to make the point of departure from the Oxus. Chárjúi lies on the left bank of that river, and forms an important point in the direct road from Bokhára to Herát and Persia. Between the town and the right bank, on which is a fort—Fort Yázty—is a most important ferry. Burnes describes the river at this point as having a breadth of six hundred and fifty yards, and a depth in some places of twenty-five and twenty-nine feet. Chárjúi is six miles distant from the left bank. It is, according to Burnes, who visited it in 1831, a small town, with a population of four thousand to five thousand, pleasantly situated on the verge of culture and desolation. A pretty fort, crowning a hillock, overlooks the town. It is probable that since that period the population has considerably increased.

The description given by Burnes of the trade at Chárjúi is so graphic that I make no apology for quoting it. "I sauntered through the bazaar," he writes, "much more amused with the people than with the wares they were selling, which were in every respect poor. These were knives, saddles, and bridles, cloth and horse-cloths, of native manufacture; but the only articles of European fabric were a few beads and chintz skull-caps, which latter were purchased very readily. There were also lanterns, ewers, and copper pots in considerable number; the vendors of many of these retailed their goods on horseback, and all the purchasers were mounted."

Two miles from Chárjúi, on the road to Merv, begins the great desert which separates Turkistán from Persia. Burnes, marching with a caravan, made his first halt at Károul twenty-two miles from the starting point.* The march for the last twenty miles was across a vast ocean of sand—"a dreary waste of

* Károul is correctly marked on the map attached to Professor Vambéry's "Travels in Central Asia," as the first stage on the route called the Atch Hadji route—the shortest between Chárjúi and Merv.

sand-hills ; they were quite soft, but the sand was not dusty, and the camels slid down them with their burdens. . . . There was no water throughout the whole march, and no sign of inhabitants but a ruined fort that had once served as a look-out from the Oxus." At Károul there was a well of brackish water, thirty feet under ground, lined with branches of trees.

I regret I am unable to follow Burnes further on this route. On leaving Károul the caravan to which he was attached was forced to quit the direct road by order of the Turkmáns. It may suffice briefly to state that from that place to the next well, Ishk Robat, the distance is eighteen miles. (Here another road by way of Bálgui leads to Kára Tapah, north of Merv.) From Ishk Robat to Robitak the distance is sixteen miles; from Robitak to Pindi twenty miles; from Pindi to Nizusháki twenty miles; thence to Khálka twenty miles; and from Khálka to Merv twenty-six miles—seven marches, averaging a trifle over twenty miles a day.

I have referred to a second road from Chárjúi, on the same lines as the first as far as Ishk Robat, whence it branches westward to Bálgui, and proceeds

by Sir-áb and Uchgúi to Kára Tapah, a little to the north of Merv. This route, known to the native traders as the Rafatak route, is about ten miles longer than the other. It is, however, perfectly feasible for caravans.

It was into this route, indeed, that Burnes and his party moved from Károul, when ordered so to do by the Turkmáns. According to Burnes, Bálgui is twenty-four miles from Károul. It is simply a well about four feet in diameter, thirty feet deep. The water was good.

The desert is described by Burnes in colours far from glowing. There was no water save at the wells, and a few lizards, rats, and beetles, with here and there a solitary bird, were the only inhabitants. Some of the sand-hills attained the height of sixty feet, an elevation at which they are bare of all vegetation. The heat of the sand rose to one hundred and fifty degrees; that of the atmosphere exceeded one hundred degrees; and it was the steadiness of the wind alone that made travelling possible.

It is interesting to note the pace of the caravan under these difficult circumstances. On this point Burnes took accurate observations, which he thus

records. "Our caravan advanced at a firm and equal pace among the sand. . . . They" (the camels) "moved at the rate of two miles and one-eighth in the hour (three thousand seven hundred and forty yards); and I have since found that the judicious Volney assigns the distance of three thousand six hundred yards as the hourly journey of a camel in the sands of Egypt and Syria."

The third march was a long one, thirty-five miles, to Sir-áb—a well with water—which first tasted fetid, but which exposure to the atmosphere rendered sweet. In this march the nature of the country somewhat changed. The great sand-hills disappeared; the desert presented an undulating and uneven country of sand, partially covered with shrubs.

The fourth march led to Uchgúi, or the Three Wells, distance twenty-six miles. The water here was bitter, but, records Burnes,* "the shepherds seem indifferent to its quality." The country, as the caravan

* Burnes does not give the actual distance; but whereas the march to Sir-áb—the distance of which is given—occupied twenty-four hours, and that to Uchgúi only eighteen hours, it is reasonable to conclude that the length of the latter was shorter by one-fourth than that of the former.

advanced, became more flat and free from sand, though it still ran in alternate ridges and hollows.

The fifth march was to the banks of the Murgháb, to a place called Khwája Abdulla, distant thirty miles. Khwája Abdulla is twelve miles from Ulísha, and four or five more from Merv. The total distance by this, the second, route, between Chárjúi and Merv is about one hundred and fifty-four miles.

In every respect this route is inferior to the first route. Not to speak of the small increase in distance, the supplies of water are fewer and the water itself is less palatable. Burnes considered it extremely doubtful if the three arms composing an army could cross by this road. His conclusion is based mainly on the fact that water was both bitter and scanty, and that there is nothing that so quickly demoralises an army as the want of good water. He likewise lays stress on the want of fodder for horses. He admits, however, that the road might be made practicable for guns, by placing brushwood, which abounds, on the sand, and that many armies have crossed it before. The difficulties to the route made by Burnes seem then at once to disappear. If the road could be made practicable for guns it could be made practi-

able for supply-carts. There is abundant water in the Oxus, and there are thousands of camels in the desert. The water carried in skins, though less palatable than fresh water, could easily be endured for a week; and in less than a week an invading army would be at Merv on the Murgháb, with a choice of two routes, both well supplied with water, to Herát. It is fair to conclude, then, that the second route, though inferior to the first, is practicable for an army.

There is, likewise, a third route, east of the first route, and not much longer than the second. This route, called the Yalkújú route, starts from a point a few miles higher up the Oxus than Chárjúi and runs to Kazáldi, a post on the Murgháb, below Merv. Beyond the fact that it is practicable for caravans, but little is known of this route.

We have thus three routes between Chárjúi and Merv. An examination of the country proves that, with sufficient preparation, the assertion of the Russian general that he could accomplish the distance with a sufficient force in five days, was no vain boast. The task would be difficult, but, unless the general were opposed in force, it could be performed. The case, however, would be different if the Russian ad-

vance were to be opposed by the Turkmáns. In that case it would be possible to cause it to end in disaster. The wells are not always easy to find; the Turkmáns alone know their exact position. A long train of baggage carts and camels would invite attack from the swarthy horsemen of the desert; and such an attack would so impede the hostile force as to render a successful march on Merv in the highest degree improbable. So far, then, the Turkmáns and the desert are the best allies of Great Britain. The desert remains, and has remained for ages, difficult yet feasible. But the Turkmáns? The services of the Turkmáns will be at the disposal of the European nation which shall first occupy Herát!

The opinion I have here recorded regarding the practicability of the route is confirmed by Ferrier. "A Russian army," writes that traveller,* "might thus direct its march, as it thought fit, either to Khúlm, or, withdrawing from the river on its arrival at Chárjúi, reach Merv by the desert, and marching along the fertile and populous banks of the Murgháb,

* "Caravan Journeys," by J. P. Ferrier. London: 1856. John Murray.

reach Herát. There would not be any obstacle of a serious nature to stop an army on its way to the river, and the desert between it and Merv offers no difficulties that cannot be surmounted." Again the question arises—Will Russia exterminate the Turkmáns; or will England, by occupying Herát, make of them her firmest and her best allies?

CHAPTER VIII.

HERAT TO MAIMANE AND ANDKHO.

THE stages from Herát to Maimané and Ándkho may be thus roughly enumerated :—

Herát to Kurrukh, four miles.

Kurrukh to Kila-Nó, twenty miles.

Kilá-Nó to Bála Murgháb, twenty miles.

Bála Murgháb to Kila Véli, twenty-five miles.

Kila Véli to Chitchehta, twelve miles.

Chitchehta to Nárin, twelve miles.

Nárin to Kaisar, seven miles.

Kaisar to Maimané, twenty-five miles.

Maimané to Ándkho, twenty-two miles.

The total distance is, thus, to Maimané, one hundred and twenty-five miles; to Ándkho, one hundred and forty-seven miles.

Regarding the road between Herát and Kurrukh, Vambéry, who made the journey between Herát and Ándkho in 1863, thus describes the latter portion of it, that nearest to Herát : “ The traveller approaching from the north will certainly be surprised when, on turning round the mountain Khodja Abd-úlla Ansári, he sees lying before him the beautiful immense plain called Djölghei Herát, with its numerous canals and scattered groups of villages.” The traveller from Herát to Maimané, crossing this beautiful and fertile plain, and at a distance of four miles reaches Kurrukh at the foot of one of the spurs of the Saféd Koh. The distance is so short and the road so easy, that but for the fact that, with a difficult mountain route before an army, it is always advisable to make a short journey the first day, it could scarcely be called a march. That title has, however, under the circumstances, been always conferred upon it.

The distance from Kurrukh to Kila-No is twenty miles. So great, however, are the difficulties of the route, that the caravan with which Vambéry marched required four days to overcome them. On the first of those days, the easiest, the ridge, at the foot

of which lies Kurrukh, is crossed into the valley between it and the Sáraband mountain. In this valley the halt is made at the village Sertcheshme.* Thence, the second day, the traveller ascends the Sáraband, covered with eternal snows. The ascent, after emerging from the valley, is continuous, and, according to Vambéry, both difficult and dangerous. "There are some very dangerous places," writes that experienced traveller, "the path, passing close to the edge of the precipice, being only a foot broad." The summit of the mountain formed, in Vambéry's case, the conclusion of the second stage. Thence, the third day, a descent was made to the village of Alvar; and, from that place, the fourth day, over a mountainous country, to Kila-Nó.

The difficulty of the road consists, it will be seen, mainly in the ascent of the Sáraband. There can be no doubt but that the track could be so improved as to divide the time I have noted by one half. Indeed, the track being as it is, the journey is made by horses in two days. It must be recollected that

* "Here," writes Vambéry, "springs, it is believed, a strong stream, that, after bathing Herát on the north side, falls into the Herí-rúd."

Vambéry travelled with a caravan of camels, all of whom, he tells us, carried greater loads than usual. Were the road to be widened and otherwise improved, the distance between Kurrukh and Kila-Nó could certainly be accomplished by artillery and infantry in two days.

Kila-Nó, fifty years ago, was a flourishing town and fortress. It is now in ruins. A few tents occupied by Hazáras represent its former prosperity—a striking commentary on the curse of a rule which allows every man to be free to raise his hand against his neighbour !

From Kila-Nó to Bála Murgháb the road runs by Mogor—a small collection of huts—over the Telkh-guzar to Pul-Taban—a ruined stone bridge built in the time of Súltán Húsen Mirza. At this point the valleys of the Gulchin and the Murgháb unite. The traveller, following thence the Murgháb, crosses the first Darband Kotal—a narrow and difficult pass on the summit of which are the ruins of an ancient castle—the summer residence of the Sultán Húsén Mirza above referred to.*

* Vambéry writes: "In the time of this, the most civilised sovereign of Central Asia, the whole of the neighbourhood was

Descending from this pass the traveller crosses the second and more imposing Darband Kotal, its summit likewise surmounted by a ruined fortress. From this point Bála Murgháb is reached without difficulty. The distance is computed to be about twenty miles.

Bála or Bálai Murgháb is a ruined fortress, the importance of which in the days of Sultán Húsen Mirza was great. Numerous ruins in the interior and in the environs, writes Vambéry, indicate a bygone civilisation. To the south-west of the fortress, according to the same writer, the valley becomes so narrow that it merits rather the name of a defile. "Through the midst," he continues, "the Murgháb rolls foaming away with the noise of thunder; it is not until it has passed Pandjdeh, where the river becomes deeper and more sedate, that the valley spreads itself out and acquires a breadth of one or two miles. When Merv existed, there must have been here, too, a tolerable amount of civilisation." The inhabitants of this part of the Murgháb valley are called Jamshidis. Of

in a flourishing state, and many pleasure-houses are said to have existed along the course of the Murgháb." That which has been may yet be again!

Persian descent, the mixture of Túrki blood has made them Turkmán in character. Under ordinary circumstances their thrift and industry would go far to restore prosperity to the lands they cultivate. But they know well that whether they cultivate much or cultivate little, everything beyond the exact quantity necessary for their sustenance will be confiscated by the rapacious Afghán.

From Bála Murgháb the traveller crosses the transparently clear green waters of the river of the same name, and proceeds to Kila Véli—also a ruined fort—distance about twelve miles. The current of the river is strong, but there is a ford not far from Bála Murgháb. Crossing by this, the traveller follows the course of the river for two or three miles, and then traverses the mountains by a rough pass, in many places very steep and very narrow. Vambéry states that this pass is said to be the only practicable passage leading over the mountain. Kila Véli, once a populous place, was surprised and plundered by the Sárík Turkmáns in 1861. It lies just beyond the mountain range which intervenes between it and the valley of the Murgháb.

Starting from Kila Véli, the traveller enters the

valley known as the Chitchekta—one of the most fertile valleys in Central Asia. “We passed all day,” writes Vambéry, “through magnificent meadows, which, in spite of the advanced season of the year, were covered with flowers and grass that came up to our knees.” The land, he tells us in another place, “is exceedingly fertile, but it lies there, unhappily, fallow and without an owner.” Travellers by this route are subjected to much fear from the daring of the mountain robbers, the Sárík Turkmáns and the Firúzkhúhis, who dwell on either side of the road. The distance to Chitchekta is about twenty miles.

From Chitchekta to Nárin—fifteen miles—through an easy and fertile country. From Nárin to Kaisar, seven miles, the greater number of which lie along fruitful but abandoned valleys. From Kaisar to Maimané, sixteen miles, the entire road traversing a mountainous country.

Until Maimané was visited by Professor Vambéry in 1863, but one European, Captain Stirling, had, so far as I have been able to ascertain, set foot within it. Captain Stirling describes the place as a big village. From Vambéry we have a more detailed description. “The city of Maimané,” he writes,

“stands in the midst of hills, and is only visible when approached within a distance of a quarter of a league. It is extremely filthy and ill-built, and consists of one thousand five hundred mud huts, and a bazaar built of brick, that seems about to fall.” Its inhabitants are Uzbéks, of whose prowess Vambéry formed a very high opinion, and there is besides a sprinkling of Tájiks, Herátis, Jews, Hindús, and Afgháns. The trade of the place is considerable. Maimané is renowned for its carpets and other stuffs, made partly of wool and partly of camels’ hair. It carries on also a considerable trade with Persia and Bagdad in raisins, aniseed, and pistachio nuts. Horses are good, plentiful, and cheap. “Horses,” writes Vambéry, “that I saw sold in Persia for thirty or forty ducats, fetch here from fourteen to fifteen. Never did I behold in Bokhára, Khiva, or Kárshi, horses so fine sold at prices so low.”

Maimané has ever remained independent of Afghánistán. The Uzbék inhabitants of the Khanate, numbering about one hundred thousand, are renowned for their courage. Their town, however, is in no condition to resist a scientific enemy. “The walls, made of earth, are twelve feet high and about five

broad; the fosse is neither broad nor particularly deep; the citadel is elevated, and situated upon a conspicuous hill of steep ascent, but in the neighbourhood there are still higher hills, whence a battery could in a few hours reduce it to ashes."* Naturally, in a country where horses are so cheap, the inhabitants are all bold and fearless horsemen.

From Maimané the traveller follows the course of the stream called the A'ndkho for fourteen miles to a village about three miles on the Maimané side of Yakatat. For the first two miles there are considerable ascents. These then become gradually less until the spongy marshes of Batkak are reached. Without being dangerous, these marshes are fatiguing to beasts of burden. They, however, are soon passed. From the point already indicated, three miles on the Maimané side of Yakatat, the road presents no difficulty.

Andkho is, like Merv, a relic of the past. Yet that past is not very distant. Less than half a century ago it was a very flourishing town with a population of fifty thousand souls. It carried on then an important traffic with Persia in the sheepskins known as

* Vambéry.

the Astrakhan. It possessed camels, too, of a very remarkable breed called Ner, distinguished by abundant hair streaming down from the neck and breast, a slim, slender figure, and extraordinary strength. Now, the inhabitants number only fifteen thousand, and the habitable houses do not exceed two thousand. The trade in sheepskins has diminished, the rare breed of camels is fast disappearing. How has this change been wrought? By the same cause which has turned a garden into a desert in all the lands south of the Oxus; by the hand of the pitiless, destroying Afghán. In 1840 the Afghán army, under Yár Muhammad Khán, besieged A'ndkhói, which then belonged to Bokhára. The siege lasted four months. At the end of that period the city was taken by storm, plundered, and made a heap of ruins. The greater part of the inhabitants who could not flee fell before the swords of the merciless Afghán. The same merciless conqueror still governs and still desolates A'ndkhói.*

* For the information contained in this chapter I have been mainly indebted to Vambéry ("Travels in Central Asia").

CHAPTER IX.

ANDKHOI TO SHIBORGAN, BALKH, TAKHTAPUL, KHULM,
AND FAIZABAD.

FROM A'ndkhoy to Shiborgan the distance is about twenty miles.* The road crosses an extremely rich and fertile country, resembling an immense garden. Shiborgan is a considerable town, boasting a population of twelve thousand souls, the majority of whom are Uzbéks. It has a citadel, but no other fortifications. It is surrounded by good gardens and excellent cultivation. The climate is salubrious, but the water-supply is precarious. This supply,

* Ferrier calls the distance five parasangs.

writes Monsieur Ferrier, who visited the place in 1846, "comes from the mountains in the Khanate of Sirpúl; and as there are frequent disputes between the tribes inhabiting it and those living in this town" (Shiborgan) "a complete interruption of the supply is often threatened." In other respects Ferrier pronounces Shiborgan to be one of the finest towns in Turkistán south of the Oxus. The inhabitants are renowned for their courage.

From Shiborgan in the road to Balkh the first halting-station is A'khcheh; the distance about twenty miles. The road still continues across the magnificent plain above alluded to, presenting the entire way an animated and picturesque scene. A'khcheh is a small walled town of seven or eight thousand souls, protected by a citadel. The inhabitants are Uzbéks—a brave and warlike race. Thence to Mailik the road runs—likewise a distance of twenty miles—across a marshy plain, full of reeds and trees. The position of Mailik is important. It occupies a point at which meet the roads to the south, to the west, to the north-west, and to the east. Ferrier states that this position has made it the resort of spies of the princes of Afghánistán and of Turkistán. The place derives addi-

tional interest from the fact that it is built on the ruins of a large Bactrian town.

Mailik to Balkh—twenty-eight miles. The road crosses a plain closed in on the left by very high mountains, from which streams of water flow. When Ferrier made the journey these streams had broken up the road almost continuously, and sometimes formed marshes of mud, from which the horses of himself and his companions had the greatest difficulty to extricate themselves.

Owing to circumstances, which he details at length, but which it seems unnecessary to record here, Ferrier, to his great regret, did not enter Balkh. He writes, however, with rapture and commiseration of its splendid position. “The lovely and advantageous position of the Mother of Cities, in the midst of a rich plain, though favourable to any agricultural or commercial undertaking, has rendered it liable to the sad misfortune of being a constant bone of contention between the Amírs of Khúlm and Bokhára, whose ruthless armies almost annually dispute the suzerainty of the place.”

Another writer, Sir Alexander Burnes, visited Balkh at a somewhat early date. He gives a description the

reverse of glowing of the fallen city. "Its ruins extend for a circuit of about twenty miles, but present no symptoms of magnificence; they consist of fallen mosques and decayed tombs which have been built of sun-dried brick; nor are any of these ruins of an age prior to Muhammadanism." It is extraordinary that other ruins should be wanting, considering the great antiquity of the city. Firdúsi speaks of it as the capital of the Persian empire in the time of Kaiomurs, the founder of the Paishdadian dynasty. Arrian writes of the residence in the city of Alexander the Great, and of his leaving there an army of fourteen thousand men, when he marched southward. Gibbon refers to Balkh as having been the city in which, in the third century of the Christian era, Artaxerxes had his authority confirmed by the assembled vassal chiefs. But little is known of its history till the ninth century. In the year 869 we hear of Balkh having been conquered by the famous Yakúb-ben-Láis. On the downfall of the house of Ben Láis, the city and province fell to the family of Samání.

Ibn Haukal speaks of Balkh in the year 1004 as being one of the four capitals of Khorásán—Herát,

Merv, and Nishápúr being the other three. At that time Balkh was the ruling queen of sixteen provinces, having eight cities dependent upon her. The city, distant twelve miles from the mountains, was surrounded by an earthen wall with six gates; it possessed also a citadel, and was rich in mosques. Through it flowed the river Rúd-i-Haas, turning in its course ten mills and fertilising the lands of the villages and districts in the vicinity. Round the city lay magnificent gardens and orchards, producing every kind of fruit, dates alone excepted. Edrísí, who wrote more than a century and a half later, confirms this account, and adds: "The city has now become the capital of the Turks; the head-quarters of their troops; the residence of their princes, their judges, their administrators; it possesses flourishing suburbs, a considerable population, many industries, and a large mosque surrounded by bazaars; it is full of merchandise, and busy with traffic." He goes on to sing the praises of the colleges for arts and sciences, and the colleges for students; to describe the wealth of the merchants, and the consideration they enjoyed; also the number of men of distinction within the walls. This flourishing condition he at-

tributes to the fact that Balkh is a central point where the trade lines meet.

The prosperity so glowingly described by Edrísí received a death-blow from the ruthless Chinghiz Khán in 1220. Although the inhabitants, on hearing of the approach of the conqueror, despatched a deputation laden with the richest presents to pacify him, he would not listen to their entreaties, but caused the population to be butchered in cold blood. Balkh never recovered from the blow. A hundred and twenty years later, A.D. 1340, Ibn Batuta found the city still in ruins. Nearly thirty years later it was taken by Taimúr. Though Balkh was subsequently recognised by that prince as the capital of a province, its prosperity did not return. Under the Moghol rule in India, it formed an outlying province of the empire founded by Bábar. Humáyun and Kámrán fought for its possession, and somewhat later Aurangzib resided within its walls as representative of his father, Sháh Jahán. On the break up of the Moghol empire, Balkh again underwent the horrors of an assault, at the hands of Rezá Kúlí, son of Nádir Sháh. After the death of that conqueror, Balkh fell into the possession of the Afgháns

and remained for about eighty years under their blighting rule. It was then conquered by the King of Bokhára, when once more it became a battleground. Finally, however, the Afghán prevailed, and the city still endures the oppression which the Afghán alone is capable of inflicting. When Burnes visited the place in 1832, he found that the population did not exceed two thousand, and that these were mostly natives of Kábul and a few Arabs.*

Burnes gives an unfavourable account of the salubrity of Balkh. He attributes its unhealthiness partly to its water, "which is so mixed up with earth and clay as to resemble a puddle after rain," and partly to the fact that all old cities and ruins are more or less unhealthy. "It is not probable," he pertinently adds, "that so many kings and princes would have patronised a site always unfavourable to the health of man; and Balkh itself is not situated in a country naturally marshy, but on a gentle slope which sinks towards the Oxus, about one thousand eight hundred

* These Arabs are the descendants of the Arabs who colonised Khorásán and Balkh in the seventh century.

feet above the level of the sea." The soil is very rich and very productive.

A road connects Balkh with the ferry of Chuska-guzar* on the Oxus, at a distance of about thirty miles, over a route, practicable, though intersected near Balkh by watercourses.

Takhtapul is the new Balkh. It lies nearly three miles to the east of the old city, possessing all the advantages of the site, and free from the drawbacks to which Burnes referred. It has, as yet, no history; but should England occupy all Afghánistán, it is a position her troops will be called upon to garrison. A direct road, joining the road from Balkh, connects Takhtapul with the Chuska-guzar ferry on the Oxus. Between Balkh and Takhtapul the land is well cultivated.

Leaving Takhtapul, the traveller, after a ride of about five miles across a cultivated plane, intersected by watercourses, reaches Muzar, a walled village containing two hundred houses. When Ferrier passed it there were in the neighbourhood tents of thou-

* This ferry is not marked on the map accompanying this volume. It lies about twenty-five miles to the west of the ferry of Termez.

sands of Uzbéks and Aimáks. The Afghán garrison occupied a village of wooden huts outside the walls.

The next station is Khúlm, thirty miles distant across an arid plain. "On the road between Muzar and this place," writes Ferrier, "are some clay hills, amongst which anciently stood the village and caravansarai of Abdou. Both are now uninhabited and in ruins." Burnes had previously written of the road as barren and dreary, and of Abdou as being the resort of robbers from every quarter.

Khúlm is a very important place. The distance between it and the Oxus scarcely exceeds twenty miles. "It stands on the plain," writes Ferrier, "and consists of four or five villages, now become quarters of the town, united with each other by gardens; there are bazaars, caravansarais, baths, and the population may amount to fifteen thousand inhabitants." The district of which it is the capital is extensive. It contained, when visited by Ferrier, seven hundred thousand souls, mostly of the Tájik race, and produced an annual revenue of twenty-four thousand pounds in gold and fifty thousand pounds in cereals. Its influence on the states around it is, ac-

according to the same writer, not inferior to the influence exercised by Kábul, Herát, and Bokhára.

Burnes speaks favourably of Khúlm ; of its beautiful gardens, its apricots, its cherries, and its mulberries ; of the noble view it commands towards the north. From Khúlm the country slopes down to the Oxus, but the rivulet, which bears the name of the town, is consumed for the purposes of irrigation before it reaches that noble river. The soil has great capabilities, the development of which requires but a few years of peace and security.

From Khúlm to Kúndúz the distance is just over seventy miles. For the first forty-five the traveller journeys along "a dreary road, over two low passes among hills, not enlivened by a single tree, nor blessed with a drop of fresh water."* Twelve miles from Kúndúz fields and orchards are reached, and from this point to the town the country is agreeable and even interesting. The town, according to the graphic description of Burnes, "is situated in a valley, sur-

* Burnes. It is necessary, however, to record that at the present time there are three stations with abundant water at equal distances between Khúlm and Kúndúz.

rounded on all sides by hills except the north, where the Oxus flows at a distance of about forty miles. It is watered by two rivers, which join north of the town. The climate is so insalubrious that there is a proverb among the people, which runs as follows:— ‘If you wish to die, go to Kúndúz.’ The greater part of the valley is so marshy that the roads are constructed on piles of wood, and run through the rankest weeds; yet wheat and barley are produced, as also rice, in the places which are not entirely inundated. The heat is described as intolerable, yet snow lies for three months in the year. Kúndúz has at one time been a large town, but its population does not now (1832) exceed one thousand five hundred souls; and no person makes it a residence who can live in any other place, though it be the market town of the neighbourhood. The chief never visits it but in winter. It has a fort surrounded by a ditch, which is a place of strength; the walls are constructed of sun-dried brick; and such is the heat that they crumble under the sun’s rays and require constant repair. The great mountains of Hindú Kúsh lie in sight, south of Kúndúz, covered with snow. The neighbouring hills are low, creeping ridges, covered

with grass and flowers, but destitute of trees or brushwood. A little further up the valley the climate becomes more genial; and the people speak in raptures of the groves and rivulets, the fruits and flowers, of Badakhshán."

Pursuing the journey eastward to Faizábád, the traveller rides fifteen miles to Khánúábád, a village situated on the brow of the hills above the fens of Kúndúz, and enlivened by a rivulet which runs briskly past a fort, shaded by trees of the richest verdure. Burnes, who thus describes the place, writes of the heat as being great, but Dr. Lord (1838) speaks of the air as being purer than that of Kúndúz. The road between the two places is of the marshy character referred to in the description of Kúndúz.

Khánúábád to Talikán—twenty-four miles. The road is apparently good, as Dr. Lord accomplished it without difficulty in 1838. Burnes, who did not, however, visit it, speaks of the climate as being pleasant, and the soil rich and prolific.

From Talikán the road leads by Ák-bulák, Kila-Afghán, Mashad, Taishkán, and A'rgú to Faizábád, crossing the Látaband range (four thousand nine

hundred and twenty feet) between Talikán and A'k-bulák; the A'gur mountains between Kila Afghán and Taishkán; the Júnas (six thousand feet) between the latter place and A'rgú; and ascending thence to Faizábád on the river Kokcha. I have been unable to obtain a detailed account of the nature of the country and of the distances. Every report regarding those more eastern districts testifies to their beauty, to their fertility, to their wonderful capabilities. "They have," wrote Burnes, "none of the defects of climate which are peculiar to Kúndúz, and both natives and foreigners speak in rapture of the vales of Badakshán, its rivulets, romantic scenes and glens, its fruits, flowers, and nightingales." Regarding Faizábád and the district it represents, the same author writes: "This once celebrated country is now almost without inhabitants; it was over-run by the chief of Kúndúz about twelve years ago" (in 1820): "its ruler has been dethroned, and his substitute exists as a mere pageant; its peasants have been driven out of the country, and a rabble of lawless soldiery is now quartered in the different provinces. It also suffered from an earthquake in January 1832, which destroyed many villages and a

great part of the population.” The same writer informs us that the natives of the province are Tájiks; that they are very fond of society, and much given to hospitality, bread being never sold in the country. Their language is the Persian, and they still adhere to the simple manners and customs which obtained north of the Hindú Kúsh before the invasion of the Tartars. Such is the people which now groans under the ruthless tyranny of a barbarous race alien to them in blood, in customs, even in religion—for the Badakhshánis are mostly Shiah—*the tyranny of the cruel, the rapacious, the merciless Afghán!*

CHAPTER X.



KABUL TO KHULM.

ALTHOUGH in the two preceding chapters I have indicated the direct road from Herát to the most eastern point of the proposed military frontier, it must not be supposed that it would be necessary for our soldiers to adopt that route. For the troops who may be stationed in Badakhshán there are direct routes from Kábul. One of these I propose now very briefly to indicate.

There is what is called a high road between Kábul and Khúlm ; the total distance is approximately two hundred and twenty-eight miles.

* The first stage leads to Argandí, twelve miles.

* This account of the route is based mainly on the paper read by Lieutenant-general Kaye at the Royal Geographical Society.—

The first nine miles run through the beautiful Kábul valley. Turning off, then, at the village of Kila Kázi, the traveller, inclining to the right, reaches the village of Argandi, situated at the foot of the Paghmán range. It is an ascent of eleven hundred and twenty feet from Kábul, the altitude of Argandi reaching seven thousand six hundred and twenty-eight feet.

Argandi to Rústam Khail—eight miles. From Argandi a narrow gorge with stony bed leads by a steep ascent to a plateau surmounting the spur. The road continues over this plateau in a westerly direction for two miles and then descends to Rústam Khail in the valley of the Kábul river. Here the valley has a width of about a mile, is well cultivated, and abounds with villages and orchards.

Rústam Khail to Jalraiz—ten miles. The traveller continues along the valley, which, however, narrows as Jalraiz is approached.

Jalraiz to Sir-i-Chashma—ten miles. The road

Vide Proceedings for April 1879. General Kaye made the journey as far as Bámián in 1840 with horse artillery, cavalry, and infantry.

along this march is often confined by the spurs of the Paghmán to the narrow stream.

Sir-i-Chashma to the Ūnah pass, distance thirteen miles and a half. To the foot of the pass the road mounts the hill side, till an elevation of ten thousand feet is reached. Thence to the summit—an ascent of one thousand four hundred feet—the traveller meets a succession of short ascents and descents.

The summit of the Ūnah pass to Kharzar—fourteen miles. The Helmand river is forded about two miles from the summit of the pass, and the traveller enters the defile of the Siah Sang—narrow, with a rough stony bed, and a meandering stream, which has to be crossed more than twenty times before a small mud fort, called Siah Kila, distant six miles and a half from the Helmand, is reached. Thence, marching along the defile, at a distance of six miles, the fort of Kharzar, on elevated table-land above the valley, is reached.

Kharzar to the valley of Mian-i-Irak—fifteen miles and a half. Five and a half miles from Kharzar the fort of the pass of Irak Kotul is reached. The ascent to an altitude of thirteen thousand feet is not difficult. The road from the further base of the pass continues

in a narrow valley to Mian-i-Irak. Here the ground is open and well cultivated. The hills which surround it are of no great altitude.

Mian-i-Irak to the foot of the Kálu pass—ten miles. A march across the pass of Hájigak, twelve thousand four hundred feet above the sea. The ascent gradual and easy, but the descent steep and long. The Kálu valley is studded with mud forts, but is tolerably well cultivated with wheat and barley. Boulders of granite are of frequent occurrence.

The foot of the Kálu pass to Kila Topchi—eight miles. The Kálu range, forming part of the principal chain of the Hindú Kúsh, thirteen thousand four hundred feet above the sea, is crossed. The length of the ascent is about two miles ; that of the descent nearly four miles. Kila Topchi is about two miles beyond.

Kila Topchi to Bámián—eleven miles. The road lies along a narrow, cultivated valley till the Bámián river is reached. The course of the river is then followed to Bámián.

Bámián to A'k-Robat—fifteen miles. Open country as far as the Surkh Durwazai—some five or six miles from Bámián. The road here enters a narrow defile

enclosed by red cliffs of no great altitude. For about five miles it continues along the banks of a stream, then mounts by a tolerably easy road the hill-side on the right. For some miles thence it crosses an undulating table-land, until it finally descends into the valley of Ák-Robat, a small basin among the hills.

Ák-Robat to Saighán—twenty-two miles. A continuous descent, crossing at the fourteenth mile-stone the well-cultivated valley of Shátú. The fortress of Sir-Sang is perched on an insulated rock at the entrance of the Saighán valley—twenty-two miles from Ák-Robat.

Saighán to Bálgah—twenty-one miles, by the Nali-Farash pass. A very difficult and steep ascent, yet found practicable for guns in 1840.

From Bálgah the road crosses the Kára Kotal to Rúi—distance (approximate) twenty-eight miles. General Kaye writes about the Kára Kotal: "This" pass "was reconnoitred in May, and found to be one of great difficulty, the ascent over huge layers of rock, quite impracticable for artillery on wheels."

Rúi to Kuram, across the Chambak pass—thirteen miles. I have been unable to ascertain any parti-

culars about this road, but it has been traversed by British troops.

Kuram to Haibak—twenty miles. Ferrier thus describes the road. “Across steep mountains, in a dark ravine, between high rocks, some hundreds of yards in elevation. The road is execrable, covered with rounded stones and broken up by water and brushwood. Occasionally the gorge widened, and we saw orchards and gardens around small villages, of which I was told the climate was exceedingly good, and favourable to the cultivation of fruit.” Haibak was the extreme point to which our troops penetrated during the first Afghán war. A party of Captain Hopkins’s regiment, detached from Bámián, held Saighán and Haibak for some months, and thus threatened Khúlm, where Dost Muhammad had then his head-quarters.*

The distance from Haibak to Khúlm is about thirty miles over a fertile and well-cultivated country.

It would not enter into the purpose of this volume to describe in full detail all the passes between Kábul and the country beyond the Hindú Kúsh. The

* Ferrier’s “Caravan Journeys,” *note*.

curiosity of the reader to inquire further may perhaps be stimulated by the testimony regarding them given by one who, writing from his own experience, had the highest claim to speak with authority—the Emperor Bábar. “Between Balkh, Kúndúz, and Badakhshán, on the one side, and Kábul on the other,” wrote that illustrious conqueror, “is interposed the mountain of Hindú-Kúsh, the passes over which are seven in number. Three of these are by Panjshir, the uppermost” (most eastward) “of which is Khawak; lower down is that of Thal, and still lower that of Bazárák. Of these three passes, the best is that of Thal, but the way is somewhat longer. The most direct pass is that of Bazárák. Both of these passes lead over to Sir-Áb. . . . Another route is that of Parwan. Between Parwan and the high mountain, there are seven minor passes, which they call *Haftbachhah*—the seven younglings. As you come from the Andaráb side, the two roads unite below the main pass, and lead down on Parwan by way of the seven younglings. This is a very difficult road. There are besides three roads in Ghorband. That which is nearest to Parwan is the pass of Yangi-yuli (the new road), which descends by

Gwálián and Khinján. Another route is that of Kipchák" (Chár-darya) "which leads by the junction of the rivers of Súrkháb and Andaráb. This is a good pass. Another route is by the pass of Shibr-tú. During the summer, when the waters are up, you can go by this pass only by taking the route of Bamián and Saighán, but in the winter season they travel by way of Abdereh."

Mr. Clements Markham, in his learned paper published in the proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society for February 1879, thus classifies the known passes over the Hindú Kúsh.

From the Chitral valley: the Baroghil (twelve thousand feet); the Ishtirak; the Agram; the Nuksan (seventeen thousand); the Khartaza; and the Dora (sixteen thousand five hundred).

From the Panjshir valley: the Anjuman; the Khawak (thirteen thousand feet); the Thal; the Zarya;—joining on the northern descent: the Yatumak; the Umraz; the Shwá; the Bazárák, connecting on the northern descent: and the Shatpal.

From the Parwan valley: the Bájpgah, and the Sar Ulang (twelve thousand feet).

From the Ghorband valley: the Kúshán (fifteen thousand feet); the Gwálián; the Gwáz-yár; the Chárdarya; the Ghalalaj; the Farinjal; and the Shibr.

A description of these passes is given in the paper referred to.

CHAPTER XI.

HERAT TO KABUL.

BUT little is known of the direct road connecting Herát with Kábul, but that little is calculated to show that in the summer it would present little difficulty to the march of an army. The first attempt, of which any detail has reached us, to march an army from Herát to Kábul, was made by Bábar in 1506. An account of this attempt has been written by the emperor himself. The route he selected led by way of Bádki, Langar-Mir-Ghaiás, Chakcharán, Chirághdán—close to the junction of the two branches of the Herirúd—Anjukán and Khawál-Koti, across the Zírín pass; thence by Yék-Aulang to Bámián. The route from Bámián we have traversed in the preceding chapter.

It was scarcely possible to choose a more direct route, and there is every reason to believe that had it been attempted in a favourable season, it could have been accomplished. In fact, it has been repeatedly accomplished on horseback. But Bábar selected the winter to make the experiment. He set out with his army on the 24th December, after the snow had begun to fall. He marched first to the neighbourhood north-east of Herát, "halting," he writes, "a day or two at every station." The exact situation of Bádkiş I have been unable to ascertain, but it probably lay at the foot of the great mountain range to the north of the Herirúd. It was evidently a well-sheltered place, for Bábar, who left Herát in spite of the solicitations of his hosts, made the going into winter-quarters at Bádkiş the pretext of his move. Thence he marched by the route I have indicated to Chakcharán, the snow falling every day. The further he advanced, the deeper was the snow. At Chakcharán it reached above the horses' knees; two or three days after leaving that place, it reached above the stirrups. After passing Chirághdán—marked on the map near the junction of the two streams which form the Herirúd—not only was the snow extremely

deep, but it had effaced all traces of the road. Bábar halted whilst he sent out parties to try and discover any of the mountaineers who might be wintering in the valley or sheltered grounds. All their efforts, however, were unsuccessful. At the end of three days they returned, not having encountered a single inhabitant. All had left for their homes in the lower ground.

Still Bábar persevered. "For about a week," he writes, "we continued pressing down the snow, without being able to advance more than two or three miles. I myself assisted in depressing the snow. . . . Every step we sank up to the middle or the breast, but still we went on trampling it down." In this way, and literally dragging the horses through the snow, his troops at length reached Khawál-Kotí—a cave—at the foot of the Zírín pass. "That day," he writes, "the storm of wind was dreadful. The snow fell in such quantities, we all expected to meet death together." But the night passed, and next morning the storm and tempest ceased. He then pushed on in the same manner as before, reached the summit of the pass, and then began to descend. Night came on before the valley had been reached, and Bábar and his fol-

lowers were ignorant of the way. But still they pressed on, crossing crevasses and ravines over which the snow had hardened, till at last they reached Yék Aulang in safety.

Yék Aulang lies about thirty miles south-west of Bámián. There Bábar and his men obtained food, clothing, and warmth. One day only they stayed to enjoy these luxuries, and then resumed their march. But the difficulties had been surmounted. They had indeed thirty miles of hill country to traverse, but the level was lower and the climate warmer, and in a few days they reached Bámián in safety. Thence they proceeded to the vicinity of Kábul by the Shibrtú pass.

From this account it is clear that the road itself presents no difficulties which could not easily be surmounted. Even under all the disadvantage of snow lying up to the waist, the Zírín pass was ascended and its descent partly accomplished during the light of a short winter day; and that pass, probably not exceeding a few hundred feet, constituted the main difficulty of the road between Herát and Bámián.

The Múnshí, Mohan Lal, who visited Herát with Dr. Gerard in 1832, gives a decided opinion in favour of the practicability of the road. He quotes, like-

wise, two examples of the easy accomplishment of the journey. "From Herát to Kábul," he writes,* "the route is beautifully covered with villages, the produce of which can feed a considerable army. It is twenty days' journey without crossing any hill." He then states that Shah Zamán, shortly after his accession to the throne, marched from Herát to Kábul, accompanied by a large body of horsemen, in ten or eleven days; and that at a later period, Shah Muhammad and Kámrán accomplished the distance, after having been defeated by Dost Muhammad, in thirteen days. It is certain that the journey presents no real difficulties, and that it would be easy to make a road which should be feasible for guns at all but the most inclement season of the year.

* "Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal," January 1834.

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